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Developing vision through relational worship and assessment

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DEVELOPING VISION

THROUGH RELATIONAL WORSHIP AND ASSESSMENT

by

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For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face.
Now I know only in part; then I will know fully,
even as I have been fully known.
And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three:
and the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:12-13, *Common English Bible*

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the memory of my grandfather, Clarence Eugene Juncker. While he never finished middle school, he instilled the value of education in his children and grandchildren. Each generation since has attained a higher level of education. My father and his siblings all graduated from high school. All my first cousins are college graduates. I am the first in our family to attain the level of doctorate.

I also dedicate this work to the memory of Dr. William C. Placher. As a student at Wabash College, Dr. Placher became the epitome, for me, of what it meant to be a committed leader in the church and a scholar. I pray that this project lives up to his keen observation and humble faith; and, where it does not, know that it is the shortcomings of the student, and not the shortcomings of the teacher, that shine forth.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Completion of this project would not have been possible without the support of my partner Chandra. On many occasions, she shouldered the responsibility of tending to a busy household on her own so that I could attend classes, read, and finish assignments. It has not been easy. In the last three years, Chandra and I have welcomed our fourth child into the world; I took a new appointment in a different state; we moved twice (with a newborn!); and, we bought a house. Through it all, Chandra has believed in me and stood by my side. I am a better person because of our life together. I could not have finished this project without her support and tending to the day-to-day realities of our shared life. To her, I give my thanks.

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Boston University School of Theology, 2020

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ABSTRACT

This project begins to build a bridge between the commonly held assumption that congregational renewal is leader-dependent and the understanding that new life is found by tending to relationship as learned through worship. Samuel Wells' concept of "being with" and James K. A. Smith's liturgical anthropology provide a theoretical framework for relationally oriented renewal and reimagined worship. This project provides a practical means for the Franklin United Methodist Church (Franklin, Massachusetts) to conceive, implement, and assess the efficacy of worship to help congregants relate. By reimagining worship as relational, relationships should be strengthened, and the community should find new life together.

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INTRODUCTION

Vision

Where there is no vision, the people perish.[1]

Franklin United Methodist Church is a historic congregation in the heart of downtown Franklin, Massachusetts. For 166 years, Methodists have met in Franklin—first in the Town Hall (1853-1856), in members' homes, and then in a building they would construct on the property adjacent to the Town Hall in 1872. The church's history is riddled with struggle. The last decade has been particularly difficult as worship attendance and income have dwindled, and expenses and maintenance costs on the historic building have increased. On July 1, 2018, I began my appointment as the fifty-eighth pastor of the Methodist congregation (now United Methodist) in Franklin with the expressed mandate from the bishop and district superintendent to help the church create a vision for the future that includes a sustainable plan for viability and growth.

Helping a congregation discern a vision for the future cannot begin until the congregation sees clearly where they have been and where they are now. Pastors must long to see clearly what is and has been, and communicate what they see to the congregation. David J. Wood, in his review of *Leadership on the Line* by Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky, writes:

[1] Proverbs 29:18, KJV

> "Vision" is a faculty, not a long-range plan. For a pastor, vision is not an idealized version of congregational life that he must somehow communicate to his flock. *Vision is the capacity to see*—to comprehend what is going on and to discern how it connects and relates to the larger narrative of the Christian tradition. Leadership is forged by vision and discernment and refracted through the subjectivity of the leader and the community.[2]

Vision springs forth as pastoral observation and theological reflection meet congregational experience and practice. Pastoral leadership is forged by the ability to see and communicate vision—the reality of what has been and is, and how that reality corresponds to God's purposes—in such a way that it corresponds with a congregation's experience and understanding of itself. Vision does not come solely from the pastor but from the shared experience of the pastor *and* the congregation. Vision brings into dialogue the insights and experiences of both the clergy and laity, past and present. The pastor's role in the vision process is not to dictate what could be. It is to help people see what is and has been. In the words of Rev. Robert M. Durkee, the forty-first pastor of the Franklin Methodists, "Every generation is the heir to those who have gone on before them. And so too, every generation determins [sic] the lives of those who come after them."[3] Vision matters because only as we see together—understanding from whence we came and where we are—can we begin to journey together into the future. Vision leads us into a future we have not yet fully known.

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[2] David J. Wood, "Pastors on purpose," *The Christian Century* 119, no. 11 (2002): 37. *Emphasis added.*

[3] Robert M. Durkee in *1854-1954 Centennial Program* (First Methodist Church of Franklin, MA, 1954).

What follows is my attempt to see.

Fits and Starts

A petition to organize a Methodist Church in Franklin was received by the New England Conference of The Methodist Episcopal Church at its annual gathering in April 1853.[4] Rev. John M. Merrill was sent by the conference to organize the church and, in 1854, he was officially appointed as the pastor to the Franklin congregation. Meetings were held in the Town Hall. Rev. Pliny Wood was appointed in 1855. He "found some difficulty in harmonizing conflicting elements, but sustained the interest of the charge, and quite a number were saved."[5] Rev. M. P. Webster was appointed as the pastor the following year (1856). He "was unable to surmount the many difficulties which confronted him, so that the cause of Methodism declined, and the charge was left without a minister at the ensuing conference."[6] From 1857-1871, there were no appointments of clergy made to the Franklin charge. A small class meeting[7] continued to meet for part of

[4] In 1853, the New England Conference of The Methodist Episcopal Church covered all of Massachusetts. Today, the New England Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church includes all United Methodist churches in Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, and approximately half of Connecticut (everything east of the Connecticut River).

[5] First Methodist Episcopal Church, *Second Book of Record of the Franklin Methodist Episcopal Church: 1893-1914* (Franklin, MA: 1914).

[6] First Methodist Episcopal Church, *Second Book of Record of the Franklin Methodist Episcopal Church: 1893-1914*.

[7] Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, class meetings were the primary group within Methodism. Every Methodist brought into membership was required to

this time, but without an appointed pastor to "sustain the interest of the charge," it too ceased to be. "Methodism now seemed a failure. The good seed sown was apparently lost. But it was destined to appear again in after years."[8]

In the summer of 1871, Rev. William Merrill, pastor in charge of the Methodist Episcopal Church in West Medway visited Franklin and established a class meeting. The class met at the home of Miss Hattie Daniels under the leadership of Wesley W. Haslam. Miss Daniels was part of the original class established by Rev. J. Merrill in 1853. In November (1871), Rev. John R. Gushing, then a student at Boston Theological School, was sent as a supply preacher. "Bro. Gushing labored with great acceptability and success, gathered a good congregation and organized a Sunday School. As the Universalist Society contemplated the building of a new house of worship, and the old church was for sale, it was thought that it could be secured for immediate use by the Methodists."[9]

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participate in a class. These groups were geographically centered and were comprised of roughly twelve persons, one of whom was the leader. Classes met together weekly for spiritual direction and accountability. Leaders reported regularly to the pastor in charge regarding the physical and spiritual health of each member. Methodists who willfully neglected to meet with their class were removed from membership "for a breach of our rules, and not for immoral conduct" *The Doctrines and Discipline of The Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Lane and Scott,1850), 74)

[8] First Methodist Episcopal Church, *Second Book of Record of the Franklin Methodist Episcopal Church: 1893-1914*.

[9] First Methodist Episcopal Church, *Second Book of Record of the Franklin Methodist Episcopal Church: 1893-1914*.

The charge was reborn at the ensuing conference (1872) and Rev. Edward P. King was appointed pastor in charge. The charge had thirteen members—nine women and four men. The Universalist Society decided not to sell their old building to the Methodists, "and failing in that, this energetic man of God [Rev. King] at once determined to build."[10] Rev. King arrived in April 1872. A property was purchased in June next to the Franklin Town Hall. By September 9, the foundation was set. The cornerstone was laid on October 23, 1872. Five months later (March 23, 1873) the vestry was dedicated; and, on June 23 (1873) the church building was completed and dedicated to God's work by Bishop Matthew Simpson. The total cost of the building was approximately $15,000. The church took out a $5,000 mortgage. "During Brother King's pastorate marvelous revival has swept the town… Since that time the record of our church is indeed a varied one. Many 'seasons of refreshing from the Lord.' Much true work was accomplished for the Master, many dark days passed, many troubled waters crossed, but there have always remained a faithful few to stand by the ship."[11]

The struggle to keep the church open hit a critical moment when in 1882 the pastor resigned before the conference met due to "feeble health" and the bank foreclosed on the property. For a decade, the church had barely paid the interest owed to the bank. The congregation owed $5,636 when the bank foreclosed on the property. In order to

[10] R. J. Calkin, "History of Methodist Church from April 1853-1901" in *Re-Dedicatory Services: December 7-14, 1930* (Franklin, MA: 1930).

[11] Calkin, "History of Methodist Church."

stay in the building, the bank charged the congregation $10 per week in rent for use of the building.

In 1883, Rev. M. D. Hornbeck, a student pastor, was appointed. "He came in troublous times, but is said to have been the right man for the place."[12] The congregation was able to regain ownership of the church building after receiving a $1,000 gift from the bank, paying $1,636 ($1,000 in principle and $636 in interest), and signing a mortgage note for $3,000. The mortgage remained a burden for the congregation and hung over the head of each successive pastor until Rev. S. A. Cook, appointed in 1899 as the twenty-first pastor of the Franklin Methodists,

> began to wrestle with the incubus. With a courage and determination born of life in "the wild and woolly west" with few very hearty words of encouragement, he met this foe to church advancement, has vanquished it, and like the warrior of old—pants now for new worlds to conquer. The accomplishment of this feat is, to those of us who knew the facts, not only a surprise, it is marvelous, and can only be ascribed to the blessing of Almighty God upon the work so zealously and unselfishly pushed forward by this sterling young man.[13]

The retirement of the mortgage was celebrated with a mortgage burning ceremony. In her address to the congregation at the Jubilee and Mortgage Burning Ceremony (April 8, 1901), Miss Hattie Daniels describes Cook and his ministry in Franklin as mythically heroic. In her final recounting of the tale, she exalted Cook before the assembled crowd:

> But that I be not further tedious unto this audience. –hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Through the faith and perseverance and great denials of this one chosen, the looked for end has this day been reached.

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[12] Calkin, "History of Methodist Church."

[13] Calkin, "History of Methodist Church."

> This 364th day of this conference year, in the year of our Lord 1901, will be a day long to be remembered by this people, because in it the Lord delivered us from our debt.
>
> For this cause have you been invited here tonight to rejoice with us. And as we shall shortly behold that dread mortgage going up in smoke, let every heart send up its gratitude to Almighty God, as the giver of every good gift and especially do we thank Him for the gift of our Cook who has made possible this Jubilee Feast.[14]

The retirement of the mortgage was an important milestone. The mortgage payments, along with the upkeep of the facility, were a terrible burden that, in the estimation of R. J. Calkin in his "History of Methodist Church," hindered the work of these early pastors. "Largely because of financial conditions," writes Calkin, "the labors of these early 'Shepherds in Israel' have been unusually hard."[15] There was tremendous hope that by retiring the debt a new era would dawn. As "we watch the document of our past distress disappear in flame and smoke…may its glowing flame remind us of the glorious sunset of a beautiful autumn day when we instinctively give praise to the most high God and cry, 'Fair weather tomorrow! fair weather tomorrow!'"[16]

The first fifty years of Methodism in Franklin were characterized by fits and starts. The struggle is best illustrated by the fact that, in later years, different generations of Franklin Methodists would mark different beginnings. The Twentieth Anniversary (1873-1893) was celebrated on June 23, 1893. The oldest compiled history on record,

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[14] Hattie Daniels, "A Chapter of Chronicles" in *Re-Dedicatory Services: December 7-14, 1930* (Franklin, MA: 1930).

[15] Calkin, "History of Methodist Church."

[16] Calkin, "History of Methodist Church."

written by R. J. Calkin and read at the Jubilee and Mortgage Burning on April 8, 1901, marks the start of Franklin Methodism in April 1853 when Rev. John M. Merrill started the first class meeting. In October of 1924, the 50th anniversary was celebrated (1874-1924) and the church rededicated. In 1947, the church would celebrate its seventy-fifth anniversary (1872-1947). In 1954, it celebrated its centennial (1854-1954). And, in 1972, it would again celebrate one hundred years of Methodism in Franklin (1872-1972).[17] "150 years of Methodism" was celebrated in 2004 (1854-2004).

The reasons for recalling different starts may well be due to the fits the charge had in stabilizing itself, but it may also reflect the varied understandings of what it means to be church. In 1853, the first communal gathering of Methodists was established in Franklin with the organization of a class meeting and a Sunday School. The year 1854 saw the first official appointment of a pastor by the conference. There were two important beginnings in 1872: 1) the appointment of a determined pastor who saw to it that Methodism had its own building in Franklin; and, 2) the laying of the cornerstone for the first (and only) building that Methodists would both own and in which they would worship. The year 1873 is when the building was consecrated.

It is particularly interesting that throughout the majority of the 20th century, Methodism's anniversaries in Franklin were marked primarily by the appointment of clergy (1854 and 1872) and the building of the church edifice (1872). In fact, these two

[17] The year1872 is a particularly interesting year to lift up as a beginning because 1872 was not the rebirth of the class meeting (1871) and it was not the completion of the facility (1873); rather, 1872 marks the arrival of Rev. E. P. King and the laying of the cornerstone.

aspects of church life—pastor and building—will be important markers of both the church's history and its understood success (or failure). The state of the facility (and work done or not to it) and the work of the pastor will become the measuring stick by which the church's vitality is assessed in each successive year through the present. The pastor and the building have become a centripetal force that brings people together. However, when these things dominate attention, when the state of the building and the "effectiveness" of the pastor are what attract or repel people, the church surely loses sight of the mission meant to bring not only the church but also the community and world around it together.

Visioneering

Calkin's hope that the retirement of the church's debt would bring "fair weather tomorrow!" seemed to come true in the first decade of the 20th century. Capital improvements on the now paid off facility happened rapidly. As the 75th Anniversary booklet and history details, the church was "indebted to [Rev. and Mrs. H. O. Enwall] for our memorial [stained-glass] windows."[18] The pipe organ was installed in 1905 during the pastorate of Rev. Frank A. Everett. The church's first parsonage was purchased, and a mortgage of $1,500 taken out, during the pastorate of Rev. George H. Rogers (1907-1909). In 1930, the first and only addition to the building was constructed which added classrooms and a "modern" kitchen onto the vestry. Even with this flurry of activity,

[18] "1872—Our Pastors—1947" in *75th Anniversary: 1872-1947* (Franklin, MA: 1947).

membership and attendance stayed relatively flat. Throughout the middle decades of the 20th century, the Franklin congregation would once again find itself struggling to survive.

Rev. F. Willard Moffat in his Annual Report to the Charge Conference celebrates that "1977 is the first year we have simultaneously accepted all Apportionments, supported a full-time pastor, funded a comprehensive program, and undertaken a complete maintenance schedule."[19] This year is heralded as a banner year with an average Sunday School attendance of 78; however, it is important to make mention that in 1903 the Sunday School had an average attendance of 79. Total membership in 1903, reported on Feb. 1, 1903, at the Fourth Quarterly Conference, was 80. Total membership in 1977 was approximately 200, over double that of 1903. The church membership had grown, but the Sunday School numbers were hardly at a historic peak and neither was membership which had actually peaked at 289 in 1966. Nevertheless, after a decade of decline (1966-1977), the church was able to meet all of its financial obligations, coordinate a significant Sunday School ministry, fully support the pastor's salary, and begin repairs on the facility.

Stability would prove to be fleeting, though, as in 1978 the church returned to a part-time pastor, receiving the appointment of the retired elder Rev. Frank Gulinello. In 1979, the parsonage was sold "because it was felt that it could not be brought up to the standards set by the Conference and that it also had been a negative factor when

[19] F. Willard Moffat, "The Pastor's Annual Message" in *The United Methodist Church of Franklin Annual Report Church Conference~1977* (Franklin, MA: March 1977), 1.

prospective pastors considered an appointment to our church."[20] In 1981, the Rev. Samuel Johnson was appointed as the fifty-first pastor of the Franklin Methodists. Rev. Johnson began, almost immediately, visioneering.

Bob Farr and Kay Kotan define visioneering as "the engineering of a vision. It's the process one follows to develop and maintain a vision."[21] Farr and Kotan, quoting Andy Stanley, understand vision to be an idealized future of what "could be, fueled by the conviction that it should be."[22] In order to maintain focus and accomplish the vision, Farr and Kotan argue, congregations must set strategic goals and objectives. This is exactly what Rev. Johnson did; and, the process was fast.

Writing in the 1982 Charge Conference report, Rev. Johnson remarks:

> Jesus's ministry was always marked with great direction. As we read the Gospels, we see a man who is clear about where he is going, why he is going and how he is going to get there.
>
> . . . Consequently, we must strive to have the same clarity of vision and sureness of mission as he had. Being human we will not always agree on that vision but through honest and loving dialogue, we can arrive at a common understanding of what our mission will be. Tonight we begin that process of "GOAL SETTING"… May God bless these endeavors.[23]

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[20] Clarice Cargill, "More Came…More Will Come: 150 Years of Methodism in Franklin" (Franklin, MA, 2004), 5.

[21] Bob Farr and Kay Kotan, *10 Prescriptions for a Healthy Church* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2015), 4.

[22] Andy Stanley as quoted by Farr and Kotan, *10 Prescriptions*, 4.

[23] Samuel Johnson, *1982 Charge Conference Report of The Franklin United Methodist Church* (Franklin, MA: April 25, 1982).

The 1982 Charge Conference was held on April 25. The following week, on May 2, a purpose statement and goals were adopted. The church defined its purpose: "to grow as a Church in Christian Fellowship, Worship, Education, and Community Outreach both individually and collectively."[24] They set five goals:

1. To enhance the worship experience of our members throughout the Church.
2. To develop our understanding of and belief in our Christian Faith.
3. To express our Faith through responding to the needs of the local and global community.
4. To nurture a sharing and loving concern among the Church family.
5. To establish and maintain a full time minister and re-furbish the physical plant.[25]

At the following Charge Conference, in March 1983, the church passed a three-year plan to achieve these goals. Rev. Johnson reflects in his 1983 Pastor's Report: "These goals set a course which all of the committees, commissions, and individuals can follow. It gives us a vision of what we want to become in the future. We can now invest ourselves fully without fear of where our investment will take us."[26] A capital campaign was started to raise funds for painting the exterior of the church, restoring the organ, and other significant repairs throughout the building. The visioneering done by Rev. Johnson was understood as a success: the church grew and the building was renovated. In 1986, the

[24] "Goals Adopted May 2, 1982 for Franklin United Methodist Church" in *Annual Report 1982-83: The United Methodist Church of Franklin* (Franklin, MA: March 1983).

[25] "Goals," *Annual Report 1982-83*.

[26] Samuel Johnson, "Minister's Report" in *Annual Report 1982-83: The United Methodist Church of Franklin* (Franklin, MA: March 1983).

church reported an average worship attendance of 100, up from 55 in 1981 at the beginning of Rev. Johnson's appointment.

Rev. Johnson's visioneering, manifested through persistent goal setting and assessment, transformed The Franklin United Methodist Church. Rev. Johnson acknowledges as much in his 1988 Pastor's Report: "We have gone from survival to stable and are beginning to be serving… In five years our pledge income has more than doubled. Our worship attendance on the first four Sundays of the Fall has gone from 90 to over 120 in that same five-year period. We are not worried about surviving, we have obtained a level of stability."[27] In 1991, Franklin United Methodist Church's average worship attendance was 117 and there was a total of 266 members.

Rev. Cecil D. Lackore was appointed to serve the Franklin United Methodist Church in 1991. In his 1992 Pastor's Report, Rev. Lackore notes several financial struggles—failure to pay down the loan taken out for the organ restoration, a budget deficit, and insufficient funds to cover designated funds. "Each of these conditions existed prior to July 1, 1991."[28] The visioneering continued and a Long Range Planning Report was adopted at the 1992 Charge Conference. The report detailed programmatic and facility needs the church should address as it moved into the future. Rev. Robert Webster continued the work and in his 1993 Pastor's Report notes that "it is not without

[27] Samuel Johnson, "Pastor's Report" in *United Methodist Church of Franklin Charge Conference 1988-1989* (Franklin, MA: September 1988), 4.

[28] Cecil D. Lackore, "Pastor's Report" in *Franklin United Methodist Church Annual Report: 1991-1992* (Franklin, MA: November 1992).

some anxiety, and perhaps a little fear, that we move ahead, wondering if we can really do it."[29] The church embarked on an ambitious capital funds drive, which resulted in pledges of over $380,000 on a $350,000 drive. Over the next five years, substantial work was done to the facility: a complete renovation of the basement; the replacing of the roof; the removal, repair and reinstallation of all the stained-glass windows; the stabilization of the exterior walls; and a handicap accessible ramp added to the exterior of the building along with a main-floor handicap accessible restroom.

New mission and vision statements were proposed as part of the 1998 Charge Conference under the leadership of Rev. Matthew Wissell, the fifty-fourth pastor of the Franklin Methodists. The proposal reads:

> Franklin United Methodist Church will provide opportunities for people to meet Jesus Christ, grow in Him, and become His disciples.
>
> Franklin United Methodist Church is dedicated to making disciples of Jesus Christ by helping people of all generations know and live God's way. It is a place where people of all generations come to experience meaningful worship, to love and be loved, to grow in Christ, to share in Christian fellowship and reach out in concern for others.[30]

In her Church Council Report in the 2000 Charge Conference Report, Donna Dunwiddie, Chair of the Church Council, noted that following that year's Ash Wednesday service (March 8, 2000), an updated mission statement was approved:

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[29] Robert Webster, "Pastors Report: Annual Church Conference October 31, 1993" in *Franklin United Methodist Church Annual Reports 1992-1993: Church Conference October 31, 1993* (Franklin, MA: October 1993).

[30] "Proposed Vision and Mission Statements" in *Franklin United Methodist Church Annual Reports 1997-1998* (Franklin, MA: 1998).

> Franklin United Methodist Church is dedicated to making disciples of Jesus Christ by helping people know and live God's way. It is a place where all come to experience meaningful worship, to love and be loved, to grow in Christ and reach out in concern for others.[31]

This mission/vision statement, like the first statement adopted during Rev. Johnson's appointment, was meant to guide the church's actions. Farr and Kotan note that "we have never seen a church grow by hanging a mission and vision statement on the wall. On the other hand, we have never seen a growing congregation that didn't deeply understand the mission and vision."[32] This observation was confirmed in Franklin from 1991-2002. Having an approved mission and vision statement did not guarantee growth. During this time, the vision was clear, goals were set, a massively successful capital campaign was executed, but membership totals remained relatively constant, and average worship attendance dropped by 16% to 99 in 2002.

Visioneering can be a powerful means of motivating people for a limited amount of time, but it cannot sustain growth over a long period of time. "Because the vision is a snapshot of your preferred future, the vision should be recast every three to five years… Vision casting in a church creates momentum, energy, excitement, and alignment, and it legitimizes leadership and increases giving."[33] Visioneering is nimble in that it allows congregations to address a series of problems over a defined amount of time (i.e., over

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[31] Donna L. Dunwiddie, "Church Council" in *Franklin United Methodist Church Annual Reports 1999-2000* (Franklin, MA: 2000).

[32] Farr and Kotan, *10 Prescriptions*, 3.

[33] Farr and Kotan, *10 Prescriptions*, 6.

one, three, five, or ten years), but stagnation occurs and motivations wane if the statement and goals are not regularly evaluated and updated.

Anthony B. Robinson, in *Changing the Conversation: A Third Way for Congregations,* describes vision as the work that needs to be done in order to accomplish a purpose.[34] Robinson is explicit that vision is about solving the problems that keep a congregation from fully living into its purpose. One of the challenges of such a hyper-focused understanding of vision is that it can lose sight of God's purposes beyond the congregation and community. Visioneering asks, in Robinson's words, "What is God calling *us* to do in the next one, three, five, ten years so that *we* may more fully realize *our* purpose?"[35] Visioneering does not ask, "What is God's purpose and how can we work to make God's future a reality?" The danger in setting such specific goals is that the congregation can lose sight of the desired end to which God seeks to move not only the congregation, but also all of creation. The congregation can gain synergy and feel good about the goals it has achieved through visioneering, but its hyper-focus on the relative short-term can cause the church to lose sight of the larger purpose and vision of God.[36]

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[34] Anthony B. Robinson, *Changing the Conversation: A Third Way for Congregations* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 120.

[35] Robinson, *Changing the Conversation*, 121.

[36] God's larger purpose for creation and God's vision of creation will be discussed in chapter 1.

Visioneering can help congregations address specific issues and achieve specific goals. As was the case with the Franklin United Methodist Church, visioneering can lead to substantive change. It is a powerful means of rallying the congregation and accomplishing tasks. Robinson argues that this is the primary responsibility of leadership: "Leadership is not…coming into a situation with the answers or 'the vision' and getting people to line up behind you. Leadership is mobilizing a congregation…to *engage its own most pressing problems and deepest challenges.*"[37] Visioneering leaders are assessed based on their ability to mobilize people around communal problems and challenges. As we will see in the next epoch of The Franklin United Methodist Church's history, when leaders transition and see the challenges differently, conflict can arise.

Renewed Growth & Rapid Decline

On July 1, 2002, Rev. Travis Bonnette-Kim was appointed as the fifty-fifth Methodist pastor in Franklin. In his opening Pastor's Report to the 2002 Charge Conference, Rev. Bonnette-Kim noted the potential he saw for not only the place, but also the people of Franklin. He called the church to re-evaluate its vision:

> Over the next year we will work together to develop our vision. We will examine our ministries and stretch our boundaries. We will celebrate what we do well, and we will ask 'what can we do better?' Through this process we will continue to grow to more fully embody Christ's love in our world. It will be a wonderful journey."[38]

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[37] Robinson, *Changing the Conversation*, 84.

[38] Travis Bonnette-Kim, "Pastor's Report" in *Franklin United Methodist Church Annual Reports 2001-2002* (Franklin, MA: 2002), 4.

In the Fall of 2003, the Trustees, with approval of the Charge Conference, proceeded with a capital campaign and renovation of the sanctuary. New floors, pews, and lighting were installed along with other updates. Visioneering continued. Stephen Lincoln, Chair of the Church Council, noted in the 2006 Church Council Report that the church was in continual evaluation of its mission "systematically mak[ing] every effort to insure [sic] that our activities and events are aligned with our mission and recognized goals." The significant challenge Rev. Bonnette-Kim worked with the leadership to resolve was to move the church from a "pastoral church" to a "program church." To help them address the challenge, he led the lay leadership through the book *Raising the Roof: The Pastoral-to-Program Size Transition* by Alice Mann.

Mann, building off a framework developed by Arlan Rothauge,[39] argues that churches fall into one of four size categories: family size, pastoral size, program size, and corporate size. Each size church organizes itself relationally and administratively in very specific ways. These ways of organizing influence the way churches do ministry.

Pastoral-size churches range in size from 51 to 150 average worship attendance, and function as "a coalition of two or three family and friendship networks unified around the person and role of the pastor."[40] The pastor spends time keeping in direct contact with each member of the congregation. The pastor is also the primary teacher

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[39] Arlin J. Rothauge, *Sizing Up a Congregation for New Member Ministry* (Episcopal Church Center, June 1986). A free download of the book is at: https://episcopalchurch.org/files/CDR_series1(1).pdf.

[40] Alice Mann, *Raising the Roof: The Pastoral-to-Program Size Transition* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 2001), 7.

and worship leader. In pastoral size churches, members recognize each other and know, for the most part, each member's name. Decisions are typically made by a governing committee, which oversees the daily operation of the church.

Program-size churches average 151 to 400 in worship each week. This size church is "known for the quality and variety of its programs… The pastor's crucial role is to recruit, equip, and inspire a small circle of key program leaders—lay and ordained, paid and unpaid."[41] Pastoral care is shared with a designated group of lay persons. Unlike the pastoral-size church, in program-size churches, the pastor cannot do everything. Due to the size of the congregation, people in this size congregation may not recognize everyone nor know each other's name. Teamwork between pastor and laity is the means through which ministry is accomplished. Decision making in this size congregation is not condensed in any one committee, but rather is distributed among the various leadership circles and committees of the church.

As Franklin United Methodist Church's average worship attendance grew, the transition from pastoral to program size congregation became more imperative. Change was difficult. In the 2006 Church Council Report at Charge Conference, Stephen Lincoln, Chair of the Church Council, notes: "As 'change' continues, so does the role of our Pastor. We struggle with these changes… I am confident that we will collectively manage these changes and will emerge a stronger, more diversified, and caring church

[41] Mann, *Raising the Roof,* 7.

family."[42] He raised the same sentiment in his 2007 report: "As a church family, we continue the sometimes difficult journey of evolution from a pastoral church to a program church."[43] Pastor and key lay leaders committed to work together. Worship attendance continued to grow to its highest historical peak in 2007 at 140 people (an over 30% increase from 2002).[44]

The growth of the Franklin United Methodist Church between 1981 and 2007 ran contrary to national trends. In 1980, the United Methodist Church in the United States had 9,519,407 members. By 2000, membership had dropped 11.6% to 8,411,503 members. A decade later (2010), the denomination saw another 9.5% decrease in total membership (7,679,850) in the United States.[45] One of the factors that may have helped the Franklin church grow, in spite of national denominational decline, was the growth and development of the Town of Franklin. From 1980 to 2000, the town of Franklin saw

[42] Stephen Lincoln, "Church Council Report" in *Franklin United Methodist Church 2006 Annual Meeting* (Franklin, MA: 2006), 18.

[43] Stephen Lincoln, "Church Council Report" in *Franklin United Methodist Church 2007 Annual Meeting* (Franklin, MA: 2007), 22

[44] The 2007 Charge Conference Report of the Worship Committee notes that the average attendance in conference year 2007 was 132. End of year statistical reports turned into the conference office noted an average attendance of 140.

[45] "United Methodist Membership Statistics: United Methodist Membership as Compared to the United States Population Census," General Commission on Archives and History, accessed February 26, 2020, http://www.gcah.org/history/united-methodist-membership-statistics.

a 62.26% increase in population.[46] While growth of the town slowed between 2000 to 2010, the town's population increased another 7%. The growth of the community surrounding the church provided fertile opportunities for growth within the church.

As the town and church community grew and the church began to work through the process of understanding itself as a large program-size church, a committee drafted a new vision for The Franklin United Methodist Church. The vision team comprised a subset of leaders who worked directly with the pastor and reported regularly to the Church Council and congregation. The visioning process began in the fall of 2006 and followed the basic outline for discerning a vision found in *Raising the Roof*. At the Church Council meeting on April 22, 2007, Rev. Bonnette-Kim shared a draft statement developed by the vision committee, which "had chosen to write the statement from the perspective of the year 2020 rather than the present. The point of the vision statement is to be aspirational and inspirational as we plan where we are going."[47] In particular, the committee focused their visioneering on four areas: building, worship, programs, and mission. The vision statement, after presentation to the Church Council, went before the congregation for refinement. An amended vision statement was brought before the Church Council on May 30, 2007. The amended and approved vision read:

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[46] The United States Census reported the following total population in the Town of Franklin from 1980 to 2010: 18,217 (1980), 22,095 (1990), 29,560 (2000), 31,635 (2010). "Massachusetts Population by Town, 1980-2010," Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization, last modified January 26, 2018, https://www.ctps.org/pub/Demographic_Data/massachusetts_population_1980-2015.xlsx.

[47] Church Council Minutes, April 22, 2007.

> Our ministry shares the good news of God's love and invites people into a committed relationship with Christ.
>
> Franklin United Methodist Church is a welcoming and loving community that extends beyond the boundaries of our immediate church. Our physical space is attractive, inviting and is flexible in order to accommodate our needs today while ensuring ample room for tomorrow's growth. Our dynamic, inclusive worship services are offered at various times and in a variety of styles. Open to all ages, they encourage active participation and incorporate inspirational music. Our Christian education programs and vibrant fellowship groups are offered year round to all ages and encourage caring relationships, spiritual growth and personal development. Our local, national and international mission outreach demonstrates our deep commitment to serving as Disciples of Christ.[48]

This statement is structured around the programmatic offerings of the church. It is a compilation of smaller vision statements for each program and ministry area of the church. These mini vision statements were not meant to provide a guide for discipleship and faithful living as a community. Rather, this "Vision 20/20" was meant to be aspirational, providing direction to the various ministry areas of the church. This vision statement, it was believed, would "assist and help guide us through continued growth in the years to come."[49] While the church had not yet fully made its transition to a program-sized congregation, it was well on its way. There was hope as the church worked to implement this new understanding of itself (vision), but this hope would soon be challenged as the church transitioned pastoral leadership.

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[48] Church Council Minutes, May 30, 2007.

[49] Stephen Lincoln, "Church Council Report" in *Franklin United Methodist Church 2007 Annual Meeting* (Franklin, MA: 2007), 22

A study by Teddy Ray, on the movement of clergy by appointment (itineracy) in the Kentucky Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, found that churches that saw big gains (greater than ten percent) in average worship attendance under one pastor show no tendency to continue growing under new pastoral leadership. In fact, "churches that experienced a big gain with their previous pastor are the most likely category to experience a big loss after transition."[50] Ninety percent of the churches in Ray's study who experienced big gains under one pastor saw loss with their next pastor. "In total, 76% of all growing churches declined after a pastoral transition, while only 24% continued to grow."[51] While there are limitations in drawing corollaries between churches in Kentucky and Massachusetts, the study suggests that, at the very least, Franklin United Methodist Church would struggle to adapt to and most likely decline in average worship attendance under its next pastor.

On July 1, 2007, the Franklin United Methodist Church welcomed Rev. Dr. Abraham Waya as the fifty-sixth pastor of the Franklin Methodists. Rev. Dr. Waya's appointment was historic in many ways. He was the first person of color to serve as a Methodist pastor in Franklin, the first immigrant pastor, and continues to be the most educated pastor, holding several graduate and post-graduate degrees in both international

[50] Teddy Ray, "Tenure and Transition in the Kentucky United Methodist Church—Several Studies," *Teddy Ray* (blog), accessed October 18, 2019, https://teddyray.com/tenure-transition-kentucky-united-methodist-church-several-studies/.

[51] Teddy Ray, "Tenure and Transition."

relations and theology. In his first Pastor's Report (2007) to the Charge Conference, Rev. Dr. Waya took up a familiar theme:

> [L]et us seek to understand our mission as a church. If it is not visionary enough or we cannot live it as we have it, let us review it. But let us live what we claim as our mission. Or rather, let us work with God to fulfil His will for the world. To this end all discussion has to address the missional imperative.[52]

Like each of his immediate predecessors, Rev. Dr. Waya sought to help the church evaluate and live into its mission; but, his approach to visioneering was very different from his direct predecessor. The minutes of the Church Council meeting from December 11, 2007 note:

> Pastor Abraham…said that he feels the Vision Statement needs to be adjusted to fit his style and gifts. He then gave…a definition of vision based on the book *The Power of Vision* by George Barna. "A vision is a clear mental picture of a preferable future that God has given to the leader of the church." He feels that our present vision statement is largely a statement of what we are now doing and…based on the vision of our former pastor. The main disagreement seems to be based on what is meant by vision. It is his belief that the Pastor is central to the living of the vision.[53]

The assessment at the end, I believe, is incorrect. The main disagreement is not based upon the content of the vision. Both Rev. Dr. Waya and the lay leaders who worked with Rev. Bonnette-Kim were both committed to visioneering—drafting a statement that would guide people into a preferred future. The disagreement was about the origin of the vision. The program-sized church model that Rev. Bonnette Kim sought to lead the

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[52] Abraham Waya, "Pastor's Report" in *Franklin United Methodist Church 2007 Annual Meeting* (Franklin, MA: 2007), 13.

[53] Church Council Minutes, December 11, 2007.

church into was based upon shared leadership and vision casting. Rev. Dr. Waya believed, as the Barna quote makes explicit, that the vision must come from the pastor. This difference in understanding created substantial conflict. The vision discerned and approved in 2007 would eventually be abandoned.

The year 2008 was, in the words of Rev. Dr. Waya in his 2008 Pastor's Report to the Charge Conference, "a hard, difficult, and stress-filled year… As we struggle in our relationship with each other and with Christ, I trust the Lord to lead us to a deeper relationship with Him that would enable us to fulfill our mission."[54] The areas identified, by Rev. Dr. Waya, as points of conflict were:

1. The Person and the Office of the pastor.
2. The authority of the pastoral Office in the United Methodist Church
3. The Book of Discipline in the life of the local United Methodist Church.
4. Understanding our internal and external communities.
5. "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25)[55]

In this report, Rev. Dr. Waya sought resolution to these matters by asking the congregation to make a choice: either he would "humbly step back, obey you and follow whatever your instructions might be" or the church could "humbly and obediently follow where the pastor leads."[56] The minutes of the 2008 Charge Conference record that Rev.

[54] Abraham Waya, "Pastor's Report" in *Franklin United Methodist Church Charge Conference October 21, 2008* (Franklin, MA: 2008), 9.

[55] Waya, "Pastor's Report" in *Charge Conference October 21, 2008*, 9.

[56] Waya, "Pastor's Report in *Charge Conference October 21, 2008*, 10.

Dr. Waya was taking a "class which gives a deeper understanding of what it means to be a Pastor."[57] It also notes that a mediator was being brought in.

> A consultant will be working with us to help in bringing us to a common principle from which we can grow. Pastor Abraham reiterated that he desperately desires to fulfill God's will in our church, and will do whatever it takes to do so. We will build on the common principle and bring this church to its greatest potential.
>
> Some expressed that the options outlined in the Pastor's report did not allow for teamwork and that collaboration was the approach which would work best. It was stated that to be an effective leader, trust has to be earned. Those present expressed that they were looking forward to the mediation process. Thanks were expressed to the Conference for making the resources available for the [Franklin United Methodist Church] to heal.[58]

The following year (2009), Rev. Dr. Waya celebrated that "many of the issues that confronted us last year have either been resolved or they have lost their power to constrain our ministry."[59] He expressed regret over "the casualties of our conflicts" and mourned that "it became necessary [for some] to seek Christian fellowship elsewhere."[60] With amends seemingly made, Rev. Dr. Waya began again to "unfold…the vision God is giving me for the life and ministry of this church to fulfill our mission 'to make disciples of Jesus Christ by helping people know and live God's way; to be a place where all come

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[57] Charge Conference Minutes, November 25, 2008, in *Franklin United Methodist Church Charge Conference October 14, 2009* (Franklin, MA: 2009), 7

[58] Charge Conference Minutes, November 25, 2008, in *Charge Conference October 14, 2009*, 7.

[59] Abraham Waya, "Pastor's Report" in *Franklin United Methodist Church Charge Conference October 14, 2019* (Franklin, MA: 2009), 12.

[60] Waya, "Pastor's Report" in *Charge Conference October 14, 2019*, 12.

to experience meaningful worship, to love and be loved, to grow in Christ, and reach out in concern for others.'"[61]

Rev. Dr. Waya cast his vision in his Pastor's Report. The church needed to do seven things, he wrote, "if we intend to see the power of the Holy Spirit at work amongst us":[62] increase devotion to prayer, Bible study, increase publicity of church happenings including the broadcasting of Sunday worship, and expand evangelism and a plan for welcoming visitors. He suggested that in addition to these things that the church should also become more administratively transparent, define success, work as a team, pray together about the boundaries of authority, and be content with the work God calls each to (or not). In many ways, this was the most expansive visioneering ever done by a pastor at a single moment in time at the Franklin United Methodist Church. It was not uncommon for visioneering pastors to state goals for the church, but typically there were three. Rev. Dr. Waya detailed twelve.

At the 2009 Charge Conference (October 14, 2009), Rev. Dr. Waya did not give a verbal presentation of his report; instead, he asked those present to read it to themselves. The District Superintendent followed up by asking if there were any questions or comments about the report. The minutes of the meeting make no mention of any conversation about Rev. Dr. Waya's vision: not a single comment was recorded about any of the twelve things he outlined. Instead, it reports that he "was asked to explain how

[61] Waya, "Pastor's Report" in *Charge Conference October 14, 2019,* 13.

[62] Waya, "Pastor's Report" in *Charge Conference October 14, 2019,* 13.

he thought the issues confronting our church had been resolved, and he responded by describing the conflict resolution process the church had undergone."[63] The pastor's report makes it sound, at this point, that mediation had stopped; however, Chris Guthrie, speaking on behalf of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, noted that the pastor and committee were still meeting with the consultants. "The question was asked, 'where were the funds coming from to pay for the consultants?' The response was given that it is coming out of our operating budget. A discussion ensued to talk about the value received from the consultants. Concerns about the process will be discussed at the next Church Council meeting."[64] The rift between pastor and congregation, or at least pastor and key lay leaders, remained deep. Everyone was growing frustrated. Membership, which was at its historic peak (370) at the beginning of Rev. Dr. Waya's appointment, had dropped 13.2% to 321 members. Average worship attendance, which had also been at a historic peak (140), had dropped 49.3 percent to 71 persons. Whereas Rev. Bonnette-Kim was transitioning the church to be program-size, Rev. Dr. Waya planted the church back firmly in the pastoral-size category. His demands that the church follow his direction fall categorically into Mann's description of a pastoral-size church that relies upon the pastor to lead and direct the ministries of the church. Lay leaders, who were working hard with their previous pastor to learn new ways of being that were rooted more in teamwork and

[63] Charge Conference Minutes, October 14, 2009, in *Franklin United Methodist Church Charge Conference November 8, 2010* (Franklin, MA: 2010), 5.

[64] Charge Conference Minutes, October 14, 2009, in *Charge Conference November 8, 2010* (Franklin, MA: 2010), 6.

shared leadership, were frustrated by Rev. Dr. Waya's insistence that the congregation must submit to the will and vision of the pastor. After mediation failed, a new pastor was appointed.

On July 1, 2010, the Franklin United Methodist Church welcomed Rev. Dr. Dianne E. S. Carpenter as its fifty-seventh pastor. Rev. Dr. Carpenter was the first female clergyperson in the church's 150-plus year history. Nearing retirement, Rev. Dr. Carpenter was appointed to help facilitate healing within the congregation. She writes in her 2010 Pastor's Report,

> I would be remiss if I ignored the challenges that this church has faced in the recent past. There is an agenda of healing memories and reconciliation that God's Holy Spirit will empower people to address. And yet we are also a light unto the people in the center of Franklin. We are called to be the church and face the future possibilities for ministry even as we are working through our brokenness and pain. Several discussions around opportunities for healing and reconciliation have taken place and this is an ongoing goal for this first year as well.[65]

The 2010 Charge Conference minutes from November 8, 2010, include an apology to the church from the District Superintendent, Rev. Dr. Ronald Wilson:

> The members of the Cabinet have been praying for [Franklin United Methodist Church] while acknowledging that it was necessary to go by the book to deal with the situation regarding the last pastoral appointment that may have been a mismatch for [the church]. He said that they ask for forgiveness for making a mistake in that appointment. He trusts that we shall continue to open ourselves to the leading of the Holy Spirit for the sake of the Gospel.[66]

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[65] Dianne E. S. Carpenter, "Pastor's Report" in *Franklin United Methodist Church Charge Conference November 8, 2010* (Franklin, MA: 2010), 8-9.

[66] Charge Conference Minutes, November 8, 2010, in *Franklin United Methodist Church Charge Conference October 12, 2011* (Franklin, MA: 2011), 5.

Charge Conference reports through Rev. Dr. Carpenter's pastorate show little to no goal setting or visioneering. By the end of the appointment in 2018, membership had climbed back up to 370;[67] however, the decline in average worship attendance continued, falling another 18.3% to 58 persons.

Visionary Leadership

On July 1, 2018, I was appointed as the fifty-eighth pastor of the Franklin Methodists. My letter of appointment names one of my top priorities to be to "lead…and challenge [Franklin United Methodist Church] to faithfully discern a strategic plan, goals, a renewed mission and vision for ministry… Help them with a ministry plan which would bring others to Christ."

Each of the "successful" visioning processes used at the Franklin United Methodist Church in the past has focused on programs and facility. They were rooted in the attractional model of being church, which assumes that so long as we have "it" or do "it," they will come. To attract youth, the church needs a good youth program. If the church wants young families, then it must offer changing stations in the bathrooms, a well-maintained nursery, and a vibrant Sunday School. The attractional model assumes that the church is a viable option for people. It assumes that people want to be part of the church if only they were invited or engaged in the right way through attractive buildings

[67] 2017 marked a new peak in membership at 373 members. Average worship attendance that year was 58.

and relevant programming. Bishop Robert Schnase points out in his article "5 Practices for Fruitful Congregations in a Post-Attractional Era" that

> Attractional models worked in the past when the culture expected people to attend worship and people wanted to be members of churches. What happens when people no longer trust institutions in general or the church in particular? Or when next generations don't share a taste for the style of music we offer in worship and don't appreciate the one-way verbal communication of a sermon? Becoming a member of anything is unappealing to many people and does not motivate them to deepen their spiritual lives. They are not seeking to join anything. Many churches are surrounded by neighbors who speak a different language or who are of a different ethnicity than the majority in the congregation. What would cause them to show up for worship?[68]

Drastic changes in culture have challenged the attractional church model. With the fall of Christendom in the United States, it can no longer be assumed that people are Christian, that they have a basic understanding of Christian Scripture or doctrine, or that they attend church.[69] The Pew Research Center has found that in the last decade alone the percentage of persons who identify as Christian in the United States has dropped by twelve percent.[70] Twenty-six percent of persons now identify as "unaffiliated," up nine

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[68] Robert Schnase, "5 Practices for Fruitful Congregations in a Post-Attractional Era," Leading Ideas, Lewis Center for Church Leadership, October 17, 2018, https://www.churchleadership.com/leading-ideas/5-practices-for-fruitful-congregations-in-a-post-attractional-era/.

[69] Anthony B. Robinson, *Transforming Congregational Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), offers a concise description of America's changing culture and the ways in which congregations can transform to find new life in these changing times.

[70] "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace: An update on America's changing religious landscape," Religion and Public Life, Pew Research Center, October 17, 2019, https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/.

percent from 2009.[71] The Barna Group has named Providence, Rhode Island, and Boston, Massachusetts, the major metropolitan areas adjacent to the town of Franklin, as the third and fifth (respectively) most "post-Christian" cities in America with nearly 60% of the population not practicing or identifying as Christian.[72] Given the reality of the culture that now surrounds the Franklin United Methodist Church, it cannot be assumed that visions built around attractional assumptions will ever be successful. The type of visioneering that assumes the church needs only to discern its pressing problems and challenges, revamp programs, and renovate the facility will most likely fail in the growing secular, post-Christian culture that swirls around the church. In short, the assumptions that fueled and made successful the visioneering of the past will not work. The church's vision needs to be less about institutional preservation and more missional. Visionary leadership helps people see and live into this missional purpose.

Alan Hirsch, in *Forgotten Ways: Reactivating Apostolic Movements*, defines a missional church as "a community of God's people that defines itself, and organizes its life around, its real purpose of being an agent of God's mission to the world."[73] Missional churches do not organize themselves or create visions rooted in *their* greatest challenges and problems. Missional churches seek, often in spite of their challenges and

[71] "In U.S., Decline of Christianity."

[72] "The Most Post-Christian Cities in America: 2019," Barna, June 5, 2019, https://www.barna.com/research/post-christian-cities-2019/.

[73] Alan Hirsch, *Forgotten Ways: Reactivating Apostolic Movements* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006), 82.

problems, to orient themselves around God's will and future for the world. Becoming a missional church, reorienting a community's life around the future God desires (as opposed to that which may be more institutionally prudent) takes visionary leadership.

Scripture records that Jesus and his disciples were traveling by Bethsaida when some people brought out a blind man. They begged Jesus to heal the man.

> Taking the blind man's hand, Jesus led him out of the village. After spitting on his eyes and laying his hands on the man, he asked him, 'Do you see anything?'
>
> The man looked up and said, 'I see people. They look like trees, only they are walking around.
>
> Then Jesus placed his hands on the man's eyes again. He looked with his eyes wide open, his sight was restored, and he could see everything clearly. (Mark 8:23-24, CEB)

Visionary leadership, in my experience, is often like the experience of the blind man from Bethsaida. His perception, at first, was off. He knew he was looking at people, but they looked to him like Ents—walking trees (drawing upon an image from J. R. R. Tolkien). It was only in describing what he saw to Jesus that he was able to look again, "with eyes wide open," and see the people around him as people. Visionary leadership is about seeking to see clearly. It is a constant describing of what one sees with the hope that in sharing one's observations, the leader might be able to see more clearly, with eyes wide open.

Visionary leaders, in contrast to visioneering leaders, do not seek clarity about a desired organizational future with restored buildings, bigger programs, and more people to work the cogs of a growing institution. Instead, visionary leaders dare to see with clarity the present so that they can journey with people into God's future. Visionary leadership is not about one-, three-, or five-year plans that address the problems,

challenges, and interests of an institution. It is not about helping institutions grow but is instead about seeing people and journeying with them into God's vision of the future.

CHAPTER ONE

God's Vision

I am the LORD, and I do not change;
and you, children of Jacob, have not perished.
Ever since the time of your ancestors,
you have deviated from my laws
and have not kept them.
Return to me and I will return to you,
says the LORD of heavenly forces.
But you say,
"How should we return?"[74]

God's purposes do not change (cf. Malachi 3:6 and Psalm 102:25-28). The vision God holds before us is as it has always been. God's vision for the future is the same vision God had in the beginning. The challenge for the church in every age and place is to discern how God's vision might best be lived out in the church's current context.[75] The vision God calls the church to live into is centered in relationship; and, it culminates in all things, "whether things on earth or in the heavens" (Colossians 1:20, CEB), being reconciled to God through Christ. As Samuel Wells argues, "God has no ambitions and seeks no final goal beyond restored relationship."[76] The vision scripture holds before us

[74] Malachi 3:6-7, *Common English Bible.*

[75] Learning to live into God's vision will be the topic of chapter 3.

[76] Samuel Wells, *A Nazareth Manifesto: Being with God* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 33-34.

is a day when God and humanity see each other face-to-face and live together in peace. God "will dwell with them. . . . wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more. There will be no mourning, crying, or pain anymore" (Revelation 21:3-4, CEB). All that separates us from God and one another will be no more. This vision of restored relationship, cosmic reconciliation, is reflective of God's being. God exists in relationship (Trinity) and calls all creation into the same.

The Relational God

The reflection that led to the doctrine of the Trinity began when early Christ followers, who believed in one God, adopted beliefs and practices that implied Jesus Christ is God. These early Christians recognized that Jesus prayed to one he called Father. There was, they believed, distinction between Jesus and the one he called Father, but, in some way, they were also both God. This distinction and dilemma plays itself out on the cross when the crucified Christ, near death cries out, "My God, my God, why have you left me" (cf. Matthew 27:46-50)? This scene must eventually include the Holy Spirit but, as William C. Placher notes, "at the start, what is clear is that Christians have to find a way to say that Christ who is God died on the cross feeling himself abandoned by God—and yet there is one God. Trinitarian theology is the exercise in figuring out what needs to be the case in order for it to be possible to say that."[77] Christians have to find language to describe how Jesus and the one he called Father (and eventually the Holy

[77] William C. Placher, *The Triune God: An Essay in Postliberal Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 7.

Spirit) are both completely differentiated and yet also one God. "The task of Trinitarian reflection is then to show these three are one, and it is a task central to Christian faith."[78]

The way in which we come to know God is through God's self-revelation. Human understanding and human religious practice do not lead us to God. "Indeed, where you get, if you think you have gotten to God by your own efforts, is always an idol. But here is the good news of Christian faith: we do not need to try to find our way to God, for in Jesus Christ *God* has come to *us.*"[79] God seeks to be in relationship. God is revealed, and ultimately God finds God's being, in relationship. As God reveals God's self to us and as we learn to relate with God (and neighbor), we find life now and into eternity.

God is a relational being. God exists, argues John D. Zizioulas, because of the relationship between Jesus, the one he called Father, and the Holy Spirit. "Communion" is the term Zizioulas uses to define how the three are one. "Without the concept of communion it would not be possible to speak of the being of God. . . . The substance of God, 'God,' has no ontological content, no true being, apart from communion."[80] The thing that makes God, God, is not the persons of the Trinity by themselves, but the relationship between them. It is important to make clear that Zizioulas is not arguing that

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[78] Placher, *The Triune God*, 1-2.

[79] Placher, *The Triune God*, 43.

[80] John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 17.

the abstract idea of relationship is God, but that the relationship that unites the Son, the one Jesus called Father, and the Holy Spirit is what best describes God's being.

This understanding is rooted in two foundational ideas. First, being is found in communion (relationship). "Nothing exists as an 'individual,' conceivable in itself. Communion is an ontological category."[81] We exist in and come to understand ourselves through relationship. Mary Follett says it this way: "reality is in the relating, in the activity between."[82] Relationships are not secondary to persons. They are the foundation of being. Second, communion can only be between persons who are free to choose to relate—or not. Communion cannot be forced and is never a given. Perhaps, the easiest way to think of this is that Jesus always had to make the choice to remain obedient to the will of God the Father. When Jesus prayed, "My Father, if it's possible, take this cup of suffering away from me" (Matthew 26:39a, CEB), he meant it. He was looking for a way around the suffering he knew was likely coming. Even unto death, Jesus had a choice. As a person of the Trinity, it was not a given that Jesus would be obedient. After all, can one be obedient without a choice to be disobedient? Jesus was free to choose (or not) to follow the will of the Father. Jesus declared his choice, by saying "not what I want but what you want" (Matthew 26:39b, CEB).

Communion (relationship) is the very substance of the Trinity, not a by-product of it. Samuel Wells is explicit: "God is a relationship. God is a relationship of three

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[81] Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 18.

[82] Margaret Stout and Jeannine M. Love, *Integrative Process: Follettian Thinking from Ontology to Administration* (Anoka, MN: Process Century Press, 2015), 28.

persons, so wonderfully shaped toward one another, so wondrously *with* one another, that they are one, but so exquisitely diverse and distinct within that unity that they are three. With is the key to the identity of the God who is."[83] God exists, finds life and being in relationship (being with). Through the relationship (communion, the being with) of the three, God (the One) is.

The Relational Creation

The God who finds being in relationship makes room for relationship. As each of the three are one and find their being through relationship, so the one seeks another wih which to relate. God not only exists in relationship; God cannot help but initiate relationship. God is a relational being. The one needs another to which to relate.

God is. In order to extend relationship beyond Godself, God must make room, create a void where something other than God can come to be. This is where the opening words of Genesis begin: a wind from God sweeps across the void (cf. Genesis 1:1). It is in this space where new ways of being, beings other than God, come to be. These beings do not find their being apart from God, but in relationship to God as the one who calls and fashions them into being. In his commentary on Genesis, Miguel A. De La Torre defines creation "as that which exists that is not God and, while separate from God, remains bound to God."[84] All that exists—divine *and* otherwise—exists in relationship.

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[83] Wells, *A Nazareth Manifesto*, 8.

[84] Miguel A. De La Torre, *Genesis*, Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 13.

The relational God conceives a creation that finds life through relationship. In the first creation account in Genesis 1:1-2:4, God sweeps across the shapeless void and orders the chaos, setting all that is and will be in proper relationship. Steve Harper observes:

> There are pairings in the story—heavens/earth, night/day, and land/sea—but none of the pairings is a doublet. Every pairing is a spectrum within which a variety of expressions occur. For example in the night/day pairing there is dawn, early morning, midmorning, noon, early afternoon, midafternoon, early evening, evening, night, midnight, and more night—before the whole cycle starts over again. Night and day are a biblical pairing… Every other pairing in the creation story is also a spectrum metaphor.[85]

God is not only the creator of night and day. God is also the God of the twilight and the dawn—the interplay of light and dark. God not only creates the pairing but defines the way in which they relate. It is through this defining of relationship that the beauty of the dawn is made possible. "When God began to create" (Genesis 1:1a, CEB), God not only created something out of nothing, God placed what God created in relationship. Just as God finds God's being in relationship, so God's creation finds life in/through relationship. There is no life apart from relationship.

"It is not good for the human to be alone" (cf. Genesis 2:18) is the first observation God makes in the second story of creation found in Genesis 2:5-24. While all that God has created is supremely good, the loneliness of the first human is not. Loneliness, not mortality, Samuel Wells argues in *A Nazareth Manifesto: Being with*

[85] Steve Harper, *Holy Love: A Biblical Theology for Human Sexuality* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2019), 16-17.

God, is the fundamental challenge facing humanity. So that the human would not be alone, God took from them a rib and fashioned the perfect companion.[86] "[The human] needed more than just a relationship with [the] Creator; [the human] needed a partner, someone with whom there could be intimacy."[87] God took from the one and made two and the two shall forever seek to become one (cf. Genesis 2:24). Humans are called to unity and oneness. They were created to model the fundamental essence of God: relationship. The Hebrew word (*'ehad*) translated as "one" in Genesis 2:24 is the same word used in Deuteronomy 6:4. Humans are called to be "one flesh" in the same way that God is one. In the second story of creation, which is markedly different from the first, the centrality and necessity of relationship remains. This common thread speaks to a fundamental truth found in both creation accounts: community and relationship are an essential part of what it means to be alive and human.

The Rending of Relationship

In the beginning, so the story goes, Adam and Eve (the first pair of humans) were perfect companions. That is, until the day they ate fruit from the forbidden tree. God

[86] I have intentionally chosen to use the singular "they" to refer to the first human. Miguel A. De La Torre notes that while we assume that Adam, the first human, was male, many feminist scholars have questioned this assumption. As an example, he lifts up the work of Phyllis Trible, a feminist biblical scholar, who "insists on interpreting God's first created human, called *ha'adam*, a generic term for humankind, as androgynous, incorporating both sexes. God would eventually take a rib of this androgynous creature and form woman; hence the sexes are divided and the one becomes two." (De La Torre, *Genesis*, 41)

[87] De La Torre, *Genesis*, 50.

told Adam, before Eve ever entered the story, that he could eat from all the trees of the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Do not eat from that tree, God commanded Adam, "because on the day you eat from it, you will die" (Genesis 2:17b, CEB)! Presumably, Adam told Eve what God had commanded.

When the serpent asked Eve if God had told her not to eat from any of the trees, she responded that he was mistaken: "We may eat the fruit of the garden's trees, but not the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden. God said, 'Don't eat from it, and don't touch it, or you will die'" (Genesis 3:2-3, CEB). It is interesting that God never prohibited Adam from touching the fruit. The prohibition was against eating. So why did Eve tell the serpent she could not touch it? Did God tell Eve something different from Adam? Did Adam embellish God's command when he told it to Eve? Did Eve misunderstand Adam and/or embellish God's command herself? "You won't die," the serpent assured Eve, God knows that on that day you eat from it, you will see clearly and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:4-5, CEB). Eve, seeing that the fruit was pleasing to the eye, reached out and grabbed the fruit. She did *not* die. Did Eve misunderstand what Adam had said about God's command? Did Adam lie to her? Did God mislead her? Eve ate the fruit and gave some to Adam. They did *not* die. Did God mislead Adam too?

When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, their hearts did not stop beating. They did not experience physical death and return to the dust from whence they were made. Rather, the relationships that had constituted their very being began to break down. While their hearts were still beating, the relational life God intended for them (and

all creation) ended. Where once they were able to stand before one another completely vulnerable and naked, they now experienced shame. Where once they could trust one another, now they blamed one another. Where once the garden provided for all their needs, they would now have to work hard to get the earth to produce their food and even then it would grow among the weeds and thistles. Where once Adam and Eve walked side by side with God, they were now cast out from God's presence. With their hearts still beating, Adam and Eve experienced death—separation from one another, God, and the rest of creation. The remaining witness of Scripture is a testament to the struggle to relate and God's mission to offer new life through reconciled relationship.

Each of these scriptural narratives—Cain and Abel, the Great Flood, the story of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Jacob—tell of the struggle to relate. In the book of Exodus, God hears the cries of God's people and seeks to rescue them and lead them to a Promised Land. The journey is a struggle. God's people struggle to trust and relate to God; and, God struggles to relate to God's people. Moses pleads often with God to show mercy to God's people. The judges and prophets called God's people to live faithfully in relationship. Even the letters of the New Testament speak to our perpetual struggle to relate.

When relationships are rent, when humans experience isolation and loneliness, when humans feel and experience separation from God, one another, and the rest of creation, it is not good. It is Hell. The breakdown of relationship is detrimental to the life God originally intended. Our inability and/or unwillingness to relate leads to Hell and death. "The wages that sin pays are death, but God's gift is eternal life in Christ

Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23, CEB)." Sin is broken relationship: our inability (sins of omission) or unwillingness (sins of commission) to relate and live relationally. Sin separates us from God, builds walls between our neighbors, and damages the beauty and balance of God's creation. Sin, broken relationship, brings sorrow, pain, and destruction—death where God intends life. God desires for all to live in relationship now and into eternity. God seeks relationship and reconciliation that we (and all of creation!) might experience life anew. Salvation, restored relationship, and new life come through mended relationship; but, the reality of our tattered lives is that we cannot heal what divides us on our own. We are too "far gone from original righteousness, and of [our] own nature inclined to evil, and that continually."[88] Our relationships are so broken that we have lost the ability to relate. We have been shut out of Eden. "The world is a hell of isolation."[89] We need a Savior—someone to show us the way to restored relationship and life that truly is life.

Jesus is the Way to Truth

Jesus came that we might find life again—"indeed, so that [we] could live life to the fullest" (John 10:10, CEB). God sent God's son into the world not to condemn the world, not to widen the divide between the world and God, but that through Christ the

[88] From "Article VII—Of Original or Birth Sin" in *The United Methodist Book of Discipline*—2016 (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 2016), 67.

[89] Arnold B. Come, *Agents of Reconciliation* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 20.

world might be saved and find new life (cf. John 3:16-17). Jesus Christ came to save us—to restore our relationship with God and show us how to relate to one another. Just as God did in the beginning, God breaks into the void and offers to restore relationship through Jesus Christ. Samuel Wells writes:

> Being with us is the nature of God—the grain of the universe; Jesus' coming made that manifest, and clarified how integral and costly it was to God; but did not otherwise say something new. . . .[T]he nature of redemption is that Jesus restores the with between God and us. . . . being with is the telos of all God's action.[90]

As God has always done, God seeks to be in relationship. In Jesus, we are met in-the-flesh by the relational God who comes to us seeking to be in relationship. In Jesus, we are confronted by the truth that God has not abandoned us. No! God comes to us. Jesus is Emmanuel (cf. Matthew 1:23). God meets us face-to-face, in-the-flesh to show us the Way that leads to life through restored relationship with God and one another.

Our redemption and salvation, our restored relationship with God, is a gift. We are able to be in relationship with God, able to see God face-to-face, because God graciously took on flesh and dwelt among us. "No one has ever seen God. God the only Son, who is at the Father's side, has made God known" (John 1:18, CEB). Sin separates us from God—it impairs our vision—and keeps us from relationship. We have no ability to see God apart from God's self-revelation. Our ability to see and relate to God is only thanks to the God who comes to us seeking to be in relationship.

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[90] Wells, *A Nazareth Manifesto,* 25.

Jesus is "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15, CEB). Jesus brings us face-to-face with God. "No one comes to the Father except through me," Jesus tells his disciples. "If you have really known me, you will also know the Father. From now on you know him and have seen him" (John 14:6-7, CEB). In Jesus, the incarnate God, we are met with the imminence of a relational God who comes to us and meets us face-to-face. In this way, Jesus is not only the way *to* God, but also reveals the truth *of* God. God is relational; and, to prove it, God has made a personal appearance in Jesus Christ.

God the Father sends God the Son into the world "to fulfill and realize the eternal design of the Holy Trinity to draw [humanity] and creation to participation in God's very life."[91] As was discussed earlier, relationships can only occur between free persons. God coming to us does not guarantee relationship with God. Through God the Son, we are invited to participate in the life of the Triune God, but our participation is not a given. We are free to choose.

On the cross, we are confronted with the consequences of our choice not to relate. In the gospel account of Jesus' death, the cross is a place of isolation and abandonment. Jesus hung on the cross despised by the religious leaders and abandoned by his closest friends. And, as Jesus was about to die, he even experienced estrangement from God. "At three, Jesus cried out with a loud shout, ''*Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani,*' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you left me'" (Mark 15:34, CEB)?

[91] Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 211.

Jesus here quotes from Psalm 22. Some commentators have noted that this Psalm ends with praise to God and therefore Jesus' words should not be taken as abandonment by God, but as Jesus looking forward to his own redemption. After all, these commentators note, the Lord "didn't despise or detest the suffering of the one who suffered—he didn't hide his face from me. No, he listened when I cried out to him for help" (Psalm 22:24, CEB). What these commentators fail to recognize is the shear desperation of Jesus in this moment. The cross is not a sign of victory, but a symbol of complete alienation. As Morna Hooker writes, and is quoted in William Placher's commentary on the passage,

> such interpreters fail to grasp the significance of Mark's picture of Jesus as utterly desolate. Jesus now experiences the most bitter blow which can befall the religious man: the sense of being abandoned by God." A Jesus who knew all the while that God was with him, that he would shortly be in paradise, would not have suffered anything like the worst that humans endure. But this Jesus suffers all the fears and doubts that death brings to many of us as well as the physical pain. "Death must show what it can do on Him supremely, as in a masterpiece. No place must be left for foolish dreams, as though everything were bound to come right in the end."[92]

Jesus felt, in that moment, completely abandoned by God the Father. The God-forsakenness of the Son plunges Jesus to the most solitary and lonely pits of Hell. Louis Lochet, in *Die Hölle gehört zur Frohbotschaft* as cited in *Dare We Hope "That All Men Be Saved"? with A Short Discourse on Hell* by Hans Urs Von Balthasaar, argues:

> From then on, hell is a part of the universe accepted by Christ; with that it becomes a mystery of salvation. Christ takes everything upon himself—

[92] Morna Hooker, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark*, Black's New Testament Commentary (London: A. &. C. Black, 1991) in *Mark*, by Willaim Placher, Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 234.

> and with that, everything becomes different. Solidarity is the thing that redeems us. . . . On Holy Saturday, we observe the fulfillment of the mystery of salvation: from now on, [even] hell belongs to Christ.'[93]

If we are to believe that God's purpose is relationship, then Jesus must become forsaken in order to "be with" the forsaken too. In *Love Alone is Credible*, Balthasaar explains:

> It is God's desire that "*all* men…be saved . . . , for there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself over as a ransom for *all*" (1 Tim. 2:1-6), who, raised up on the Cross, "will draw *all* men to himself" (Jn 12:32), because he has received there the "power over *all* flesh" (Jn 17:2), in order to be "a Savior of *all* men" (1 Tim 4:10), "in order to take away the sins of *all*" (Heb 9:28); "for the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of *all* men" (Tit 2:11).[94]

And, that includes the God-forsaken.

When Jesus, the God-forsaken One, is raised by the Father, the relationship between the two is restored; and the relational God is once again. The forsaken Christ is raised by the one thought to have abandoned him. God the Father reaches out into the deepest part of Hell—the place of ultimate abandonment and alienation—and mends the divine relationship with the Forsaken One. Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we bear witness to a God that never abandons, but always seeks to be in relationship. "I will not leave you as orphans," Jesus assures his disciples, "I will come to you" (John 14:18, CEB). The gospel is a reminder that no matter how dark and lonely our existence might

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[93] Louis Lochet, *Die Hölle gehört zur Frohbotschaft* (Vienna and Munich: Herold, 1981) cited in *Dare We Hope "That All Men Be Saved?" with a Short Discourse on Hell*, by Hans Urs Von Balthasaar, trans. David Kipp and Lothar Krauth, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014), 86-87.

[94] Hans Urs Von Balthasaar, *Love Alone is Credible*, trans. D.C. Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 97-98.

seem, God is there. "Nothing," proclaims Paul to the church in Rome, "can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus our Lord: not death or life, not angels or rulers, not present things or future things, not powers or height or depth, or any other thing that is created" (Romans 8:38-39, CEB).

The resurrection is a testament to the fact that when all other relationships fail—which will happen in our sin-sick world— "God's faithful love lasts forever" (cf. Psalm 136, CEB)! God always seeks to be in relationship. No matter how many times we may push God away, regardless of the distance we try to put between ourselves and God, no matter how many times other relationships may have failed, no matter what hell we may find ourselves in, God is always there and ready to offer us new life through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the Way to Life

Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (cf. John 14:6). Jesus, God-incarnate, is the way to relationship with God. Through the execution and resurrection of Jesus, the truth of God's relentless quest for relationship—the very essence of God—is revealed. Jesus is not only the way and the truth. Jesus is also the life. Through Jesus' teaching and example, we are shown the way to relate not only with God, but also with one another. Jesus shows us the way to relate and this way of relating leads to life.

In *A Nazareth Manifesto: Being with God*, Samuel Wells defines relationship—what he names as "being with"—as presence, attention, mystery, delight, participation, partnership, enjoyment and glory. This multi-layered understanding of relationship

describes the relational nature of God (Trinity), the way God is with us in Jesus Christ, and the way in which we are called to relate with one another.

Wells contrasts "being with," what I define as relationship, with three other forms of interaction—working for, working with, and being for. *Working for* is characterized as addressing an obstacle on behalf of another. The other's perceived best interest is being advocated for and worked for, but the other is not an active participant in the work being done. *Working with* involves addressing problems or challenges with and at the direction of the person seeking to be served. *Working with* involves collaboration to address specific problems. W*orking for* is centered around a central dilemma or problem but the solution is not sought in partnership with the person being served. *Being for* could most succinctly be described as advocacy without face-to-face interaction. *Being for* is expressed as concern for another one has only met through second- and third-hand sources. "Being for may vote, being for may write editorials, being for may donate money, being for may compile research; but being for, while assuming Something Must Be Done, generally assumes it is for someone else to do the Doing."[95] There is no working in *being for,* just distant concern. While each of these ways of interacting have relative value, "it is 'being with' that is the most faithful form of Christian witness and mission, because 'being with' is both incarnationally faithful to the manifestation of God in Christ and eschatologically anticipatory of the destiny of all things in God."[96] "As it

[95] Wells, *A Nazareth Manifesto,* 118.

[96] Well, *A Nazareth Manifesto,* 23. Single quotation marks added by this author for emphasis.

was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,"[97] life is found in "being with" (relationship).

At the most basic level, in Wells' scheme, relationship (being with) denotes a *presence*, a close proximity, seeing face-to-face. "Presence is fundamentally abiding: but it also involves resisting powerful temptations to rescue, solve, fix, or become a guardian angel."[98] Being present means we show up, but this by itself is not enough for relationship. Persons can be present with one another, but still very far apart. Relationship demands *attention*: a carefully detailed observation of another's reality. Attention, properly applied, does not assume or project realities on another. It is a self-less attending to the realities of another's existence. Attention is inexhaustible as it dives into the *mystery* of the other. Relationship is about always seeking to learn more about the other. It assumes that there is always more to learn, more details to surface. The fourth layer of relationship is *delight*. Simply put, there is joy in being with. The next two layers are similar—*participation* and *partnership*. Participation is being side-by-side, equal partners on the journey—going and being together. Partnership is about utilizing differences to compliment the other. It is about being attentive to differences and putting those unique qualities to work. Being with (relating) involves *enjoyment*. Relationships are meant to be enjoyable. "To enjoy another…is to say that, at least for a given period of time, one has nothing more important to do than to be entirely focused on

[97] From "Glory Be to the Father" in *The United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), 70.

[98] Wells, *A Nazareth Manifesto*, 174.

them, to be with them, in all the ways described thus far – to relish the ways they have been fearfully and wonderfully made, and to bring oneself into joyful relationship with them."[99] The final layer is *glory*, the shining of God's presence: God being with God and God being with us.

The call of discipleship is to "be with"—to grow in relationship with God and neighbor. It is about being present with God and one another, attentive to who God and our neighbors actually are and what they might be going through. It is about diving into the mystery of who they are—not viewing them as a picture to be drawn or a problem to be solved, but as uncharted lands to discover. Discipleship is about finding joy in being with God and neighbor, participating and partnering with God to live life together to the fullest. Disciples relish and enjoy being with God and neighbor for it is in the meeting that God's glory is revealed. As we emulate the very life of God and seek to be with one another as God is with us in Jesus Christ, we find life. Life, now and into eternity, is found in relationship.

The trinitarian concept of perichoresis describes well what it looks like for people to see face-to-face and live relationally. As Gary M. Simpson notes:

> [H]istorically, *perichoresis* meant whirl, rotation, or circulation, the dynamic of going from one to another, walking around, handing around a possession to be shared, such as a bottle of wine: encircling, embracing, enclosing. It is the neighborly circulating and sharing of all things within a neighborhood, including sorrows and joys, fears and hopes, not to

[99] Wells, *A Nazareth Manifesto*, 140.

> mention daily materiality. The Old and New Testaments testify precisely to this *perichoretic communio* of the triune life that is God."[100]

God invites humanity, indeed the whole creation, to live in unity with God and one another. Reflecting upon Jesus' prayer in John 17, Jurgen Moltmann argues that "the community of the disciples of Christ not only 'corresponds' by analogy to the divine trinitarian community, but also is to become a community *in* the divine community of the triune God so that 'they [may] also be in us' (John 17:21). This is the mystical dimension of the church."[101] The church, as it learns to live more relationally, "corresponds to God and lives in God."[102] As the church learns to initiate, deepen, and reconcile relationships, it not only fulfills its mission and the purposes of God, but also mirrors the divine life of the Triune God who creates, reconciles, and deepens relationship. The church lives into the telos of creation as it lives into perichoretic community.

Conclusion

Relationship is an overarching hermeneutic through which we can understand God, creation, and the purpose of God in/with creation. Relationship is the primary lens

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[100] Gary M. Simpson, "A Reformation Is a Terrible Thing to Waste: A Promising Theology for an Emerging Missional Church" in *The Missional Church in Context: Helping Congregations Develop Contextual* Ministry, ed. Craig Van Gelder (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007), 82

[101] Jurgen Moltmann, "Perichoresis: An Old Magic Word for a New Trinitarian Theology," in *Trinity, Community, and Power: Mapping Trajectories in Wesleyan Theology*, ed. M. Douglas Meeks (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2000), 121.

[102] Moltmann, "Perichoresis," 122.

through which we can understand the purpose and will of God attested to in the scriptures. The purpose and will of God is to relate. God calls all things into relationship. Sin keeps us from relating. It keeps us from seeing God and one another face-to-face. In Jesus, God extends an invitation to be in relationship with God once again; and, through the life and ministry of Jesus we learn what it means to be in relationship with our neighbors. With this hermeneutic in mind, we now turn our attention back to the church. How might we re-envision church as a place where the restoration of relationship (reconciliation) with God and neighbor is not only talked about, but is also actively sought and experienced? What might it look like to evaluate our growth as disciples and congregational health based on the quality of our relationships? This will be the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

Drawing Church[103]

Art is not what one sees,
but what one can make others see.[104]

There are many ways to describe what the church is and what it is called to be. To children, we teach the simple rhyme with motions: "here is the church/here is the steeple/open up the doors and here's all the people." Some, including Pope Francis, have described the church as a hospital for sinners: a place where the broken go to be healed.[105] Peter Rollins has provocatively and critically described the contemporary church as a crack house, drug den, and drunken night out, arguing that it should aspire to be a singer/songwriter, comedian, or professional mourner.[106]

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[103] This section is adapted from a sermon/discussion I led at Lee Memorial United Methodist Church (Norwich, CT) on April 19, 2015, entitled "The Drawing." My discussion notes were published to my blog: "The Drawing," *Methodist In-formation*, April 23, 2015, https://jacobjuncker.wordpress.com/2015/04/23/the-drawing/.

[104] This quote is attributed to Edgar Degas. There is another version of this quote, attributed to Degas, "Drawing is not what you see, but what you make others see."

[105] Cf. Antonio Spadaro, "A Big Heart Open to God: An interview with Pope Francis," America: The Jesuit Review, September 20, 2013, https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2013/09/30/big-heart-open-god-interview-pope-francis.

[106] Peter Rollins, "Crack House Church, featuring Peter Rollins," Work of the People, 2013, video, 3:54, https://www.theworkofthepeople.com/crack-house-church.

Scripture provides us with several varied images and ways to understand the church. Perhaps the best-known image is of the body. This metaphor appears in several of the letters found in the New Testament. Writing to the church in Ephesus, Paul reminds the people, "You are one body" (Ephesians 4:4a, CEB). "We have many parts in one body," he continues to the church in Rome, "but the parts don't all have the same function. In the same way, though there are many of us, we are one body in Christ, and individually we belong to each other" (Romans 12:4-5, CEB). To the church in Corinth, Paul explains, "If one part suffers all the parts suffer with it: if one part gets the glory, all the parts celebrate with it. You are the body of Christ and parts of each other" (1 Corinthians 12:24b, 26-27, CEB).

The biblical text provides other images for the church. Several passages depict the church as a flock of sheep (cf. John 21:15-17, Acts 20:28-30, 1 Peter 5:1-3). In 1 Corinthians 3:16, Paul describes it as "God's temple" for "God's Spirit lives in you." In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul describes the church as the bride of Christ: "marriage is a significant allegory" (Ephesians 5:32, CEB). This is an often-misquoted passage used to subjugate women, but to read the passage this way misses Paul's point. Paul uses the first century understanding of marriage to illustrate Christ's love for the church and the need for the church to submit to Christ's commands. It is an allegory for Christ and the Church, not a commentary on marriage in the 21st century. The church is sometimes referred to as the family of God where God is portrayed as a father, Christ as the oldest brother and the faithful as the rambunctious younger siblings (cf. 1 Timothy 5:1-2, 2 Corinthians 6:18, Galatians 3:26). Perhaps a lesser-known image of the church is found

in 1 Peter 2:5 where it is referred to as a "royal priesthood" called to "speak of the wonderful acts of the one who called you out of darkness into his amazing light" (1 Peter 2:9b, CEB). According to the Johannine Gospel, Jesus described himself as a vine and his followers as the branches. Christ's followers are called to remain in Christ who is the true vine. The faithful are called to grow forth from the vine as branches in order to bear fruit for the kingdom (cf. John 15).

There are many other passages from the scriptures we could look at: passages that provide a picture to help us better understand what the church is called to do and be. A particularly powerful image is loosely based on Jesus' answer to the legal expert's question, "Which commandment is the most important of all" (Mark 12:28, CEB)? It is important to note that all three of the synoptic Gospels record this event, but in strikingly different ways (cf. Matthew 22:34-40, Mark 12:28-34, and Luke 10:25-37). Each gospel writer uses this story in a specific way that helps fill in their image of Jesus as Savior. In Matthew's Gospel, to love God and neighbor are not only the greatest commandments, but also a summation of all the law and the prophets (cf. Matthew 22:40). In Luke's Gospel, the legal expert asks Jesus a follow up question, "And who is my neighbor" (Luke 10:29, CEB)? Jesus responds with the parable of the Good Samaritan and a command to "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37, CEB). In Mark's Gospel, to love God and neighbor is the greatest command and Jesus' airtight response to the legal expert makes the religious leaders realize that they will not be able to argue Scripture with Jesus: "After that, no one dared to ask him any more questions" (Mark 12:34b, CEB). Jesus had drawn such a clear and perfect picture that there was no point in arguing with

him. It is this picture of faith that is especially attractive: love God and love neighbor. The picture can be drawn this way.

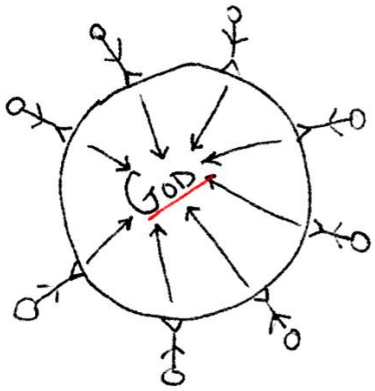

Figure 1. A Drawing toward God and Neighbor

At the center of the drawing is God: Creator of all that was, is, and will be. In a circle around God are people, representative of all creation. Notice that as one moves closer to God, one moves closer to another. Or, conversely, as the people move closer together, each draws closer to God. This very simple drawing depicts well the purpose of the church. The church *is* a drawing—a drawing of people closer to God and closer to one another.

The purpose of the church, its mission and outward call, is to help people see and relate with God and one another. The church's primary objective is to be with God and neighbor (inside and outside the church). This understanding aligns with God's own mission and purpose: relationship. The mission, will, and desire of God is to relate. Human beings, created in the image of God, are called to this divine task. We find life in relationship. Apart from relationship we experience something other than life—alienation and death.

In *Agents of Reconciliation,* Arnold B. Come paints a dark and hellish picture of the world in which we live. Writing in the wake of the Korean War, in the midst of the Cold War, and at the cusp of the Vietnam War, Come bears witness to a world replete with rent relationships that have decimated society.

> Hell is no longer something future that we may yet avoid, but is a yawning abyss of corruption that opens up in the midst of our present life—within, in the hypocrisy and doubt of our inmost spirit; without, in every act of fear, hate, lust, greed, envy, and misunderstanding that shatters human society into bits. It includes that perversion of human ingenuity, the ICBM [intercontinental ballistic missile], which trembles on its launching pad, awaiting only the touch of a finger to make the inward hell an outward reality.[107]

The hell in which we live, argues Come, is one of isolation and alienation. We do not know ourselves and therefore cannot properly relate with others. We cannot know ourselves because we are alienated from God. It is only as we come to know reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ that we can begin to understand ourselves and properly relate with others. The church, argues Come, should be a sign and agent of God's reconciliation in the world.

> The meaning and mission of the church must match in strength and glory all the horror of the world's alienation. Over against alienation the church does not stand in fear and retreat, or in vindictive condemnation and retributive judgment. Rather, the death and despair of *alienation* are met and matched with the life and hope of *reconciliation*.
>
> Reconciliation! This is the pleading call of the lost and lone world…
>
> Agents of reconciliation! This is the meaning and historical destiny of the Christian people, individually and corporately. . . . Of course, to be *agents* of reconciliation the Christian community must know reconciliation at the heart of its own life. But if the church truly knows

[107] Come, *Agents of Reconciliation,* 22.

> God's reconciling presence in Christ Jesus, then the church will prove it by becoming his agency of reconciliation to all the world.[108]

The church is called to be a drawing—agents of reconciliation, a community where persons can find peace with God and neighbor. This calling aligns with God's mission and vision recorded throughout the scriptures. The vision God holds before us is a day when God and humanity live together, relate with one another in peace, face-to-face (cf. Revelation 21:3-5). This is the work to which the church must commit as it seeks to live into what is yet to be. The church is called to draw people toward God's reign and realm. We are called to help initiate, mend, and deepen relationships so that the world is no longer a hell of isolation; and, that can only happen as we begin to see God and neighbor face-to-face. Now we see as in a mirror dimly, but when love is full-grown, we will see face-to-face (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:12, NRSV).

A Portrait of Life and Death (and Resurrection)

The central metaphor we use to understand faith influences how we understand congregational life. Many models for understanding congregational life are based on the biological lifecycle. These models work under the primary metaphor of life and death. "From the moment we come into the world, our fundamental crisis is that we are going to die."[109] This was, argues Wells, the operational assumption of modernity. This

[108] Come, *Agents of Reconciliation*, 28.

[109] Wells, *A Nazareth Manifesto*, 36.

modernistic understanding of humanity's existential dilemma has influenced how we conceptualize church.

George Bullard in "The Life Cycle and Stages of Congregational Development" describes ten stages (birth, infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, maturity, empty nest, retirement, old age, death) and five phases (early growth, late growth, prime/plateau, early aging, late aging) of congregational life based upon the biological lifecycle. Every church, after a period of gestation, is birthed, grows into its prime, ages, then dies. Each stage is defined by its emphasis (or not) on vision (leadership/mission/purpose/core values), relationships (experience/discipleship), programs (events/ministries/services/activities), and management (accountability/systems/resources). For instance, "Infancy is that period when vision and relationships are dominant, but programs, and management are not."[110] Bullard portrays this model as linear with each stage lasting for an estimated time period. There is a definitive start (birth) and end (death).

[110] George Bullard, *The Life Cycle and Stages of Congregational Development* (n.p.: George Bullard, 2001), 5. A copy of this text is at: http://archive.bwcumc.org/toolbox/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/stages_of_church_life_bullard.pdf.

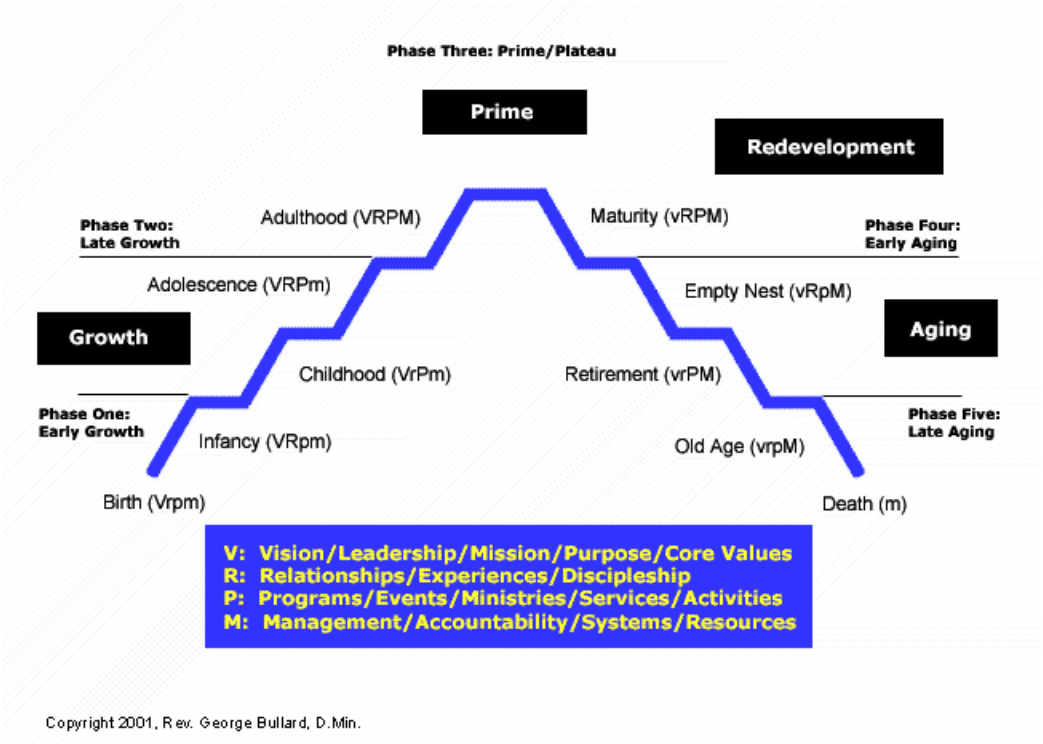

Figure 2. The Life Cycle and Stages of Congregational Development (Bullard)[111]

Bullard suggests that his portrait of church is *not* deterministic, "that is, if a congregation has a Birth, it is not inevitable that it will have a Death. Congregations can and do redevelop and move forward to a new partial life cycle that may last a minimum of seven to nine years. Congregations at Death can have a Resurrection."[112] Nevertheless, Bullard's portrayal of congregational life suggests a definitive end. The line stops. Even churches that experience renewal will one day face their mortality. At death, if a church experiences resurrection, it is due, presumably, to the birth of a new church. In the case of resurrection, a new line is drawn and the stages begin anew. The death leads to a

[111] Bullard, "Life Cycle," 2.

[112] Bullard, "Life Cycle," 21-22.

gestation of something completely different. The lines do not connect. And, those churches that experience death without any sort of resurrection? Those churches are lost forever.

The linear nature of Bullard's portrait of church life seems incomplete: it does not honor the idea that when churches die, when the community of faith ceases to exist, its people are dispersed and at least some of them are incorporated into other communities of faith. Those members carry with them into their new congregations (new church starts and established churches) the experiences of the gathering that is no more. While I may be pressing beyond Bullard's original intent, I also think it is theologically inaccurate to presume that the resurrection will beget something completely new and separate from the life that was before. Jesus was known after the resurrection by the marks (indeed the wounds!) of his pre-death life. Given this reality, it is probably inaccurate to assume that a church that experiences resurrection will not bear some of the marks and blemishes of its previous life. Congregational life is not linear; there is continuity with what has come before.

Stephen Compton, in *Rekindling the Mainline: New Life through New Churches*, offers a different portrait of the church. Compton depicts church life in five stages (birth, vitality, equilibrium, decline, death). Like Bullard, this portrait is modeled after the biological lifecycle. One of the key differences between Compton's scheme and Bullard's is that Compton's portrayal is circular. This acknowledges, writes Compton,

that "both life and death are natural and necessary for the successful perpetuation of creation."[113]

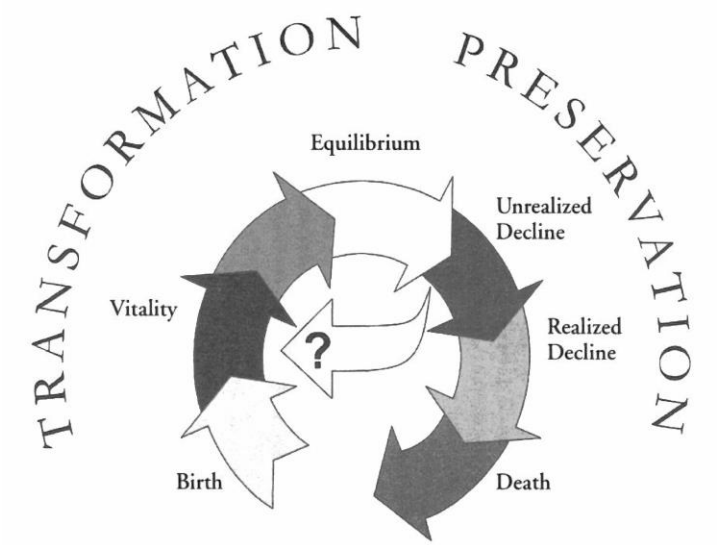

Figure 3. Congregational Life Cycle (Compton)[114]

In Compton's depiction, churches that are in the equilibrium stage are not destined for decline, nor are those churches in decline destined for death, for revitalization (becoming viable and vital) is possible. Compton's portrait offers no detail about what leads to revitalization, but, it does leave open the possibility that a church can find new life before death.

Arlin J. Rothauge, in *The Life Cycle in Congregations: A Process of Natural Creation and an Opportunity for New Creation*, offers a model similar to that of Compton, the primary difference being that Rothauge offers details on how congregations

[113] Stephen C. Compton and Jackson W. Carrol, *Rekindling the Mainline: New Life through New Churches* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 2003), 24.

[114] Compton, *Rekindling the Mainline*, 16.

may find revitalization in stages of stability, decline, and death. Arguably, Rothauge's image, while two-dimensional in nature, could be better thought of in three dimensions. Healthy churches do not have a circular lifecycle, but a cylindrical one. As a church experiences redefinition, redevelopment, and rebirth, it moves up and around the cylinder. As a church experiences decline, it moves down and around the cylinder in the opposite direction. The path a congregation takes up and down the cylinder would look like a spring. Similar to Bullard, Rothauge's depiction includes a definitive birth and death; however, Rothauge argues that there is always opportunity for new life in a congregation at every stage of stagnation and decline and even in death.

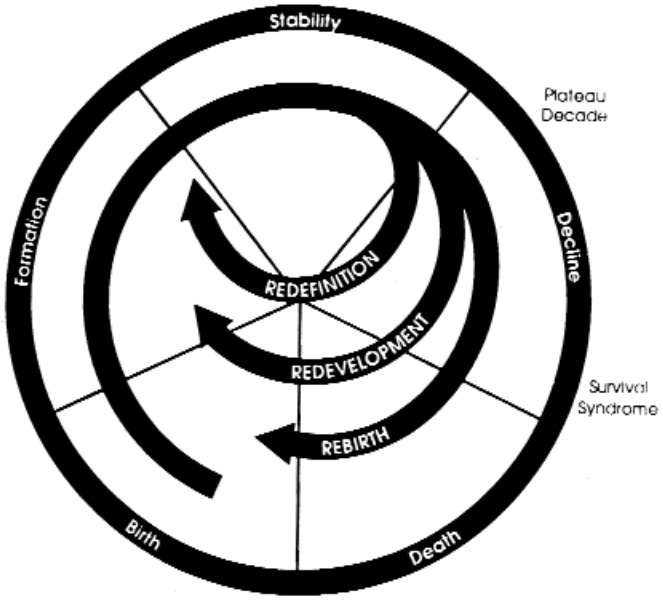

Figure 4. The Life Cycle Stages (Rothauge)[115]

[115] Arlin Routhage, *The Life Cycle in Congregations: A Process of Natural Creation and an Opportunity for New Creation* (n.p.: Episcopal Church Center, 1996), 3.

One of the strengths of Rothauge's portrait is its versatility. Rothauge uses the same image not only to describe congregational life, but also a disciple's faith journey.

Each of these models of congregational life create a portrait of life and death based upon the biological lifecycle. While each model provides its own unique labeling and description of the various stages of life, each model depicts a congregational birth, maturation, and death. I do not find these models convincing. I do not believe that the ultimate demise of a congregation is death given the Christian hope in resurrection to new life. If, as Wells argues, isolation is humanity's greatest existential problem, so it must go for congregations. The demise of congregations does not result in death. The demise of a congregation comes through isolation. Healthy congregations tend to relationship. We need to draw a new portrait.

A Portrait of Relationship

Relationship is the primary pattern of all life (the life of God, life in creation, our life as individuals, and our corporate life in the church). Each—God, creation, the individual, and the church—exist and find life through relationship. This relational life is the point and purpose of the Christian faith.

One way of thinking about the central importance of relationship to Christianity is as a fractal. "A fractal is a never-ending pattern. Fractals are infinitely complex patterns that are self-similar across different scales."[116] A fractal image bears the same pattern no

[116] "What are Fractals?" Fractal Foundation, accessed January 25, 2020, https://fractalfoundation.org/resources/what-are-fractals/.

matter how closely one zooms in or how far one zooms out. In Christianity, relationship is the generative principle and pattern. A relational God creates a world that exists in relationship. In our individual lives as disciples and in our communal lives as a church, we are called to relate. Thus, it will be helpful to draw a single image that depicts both discipleship and congregational life. While the image itself may not be a fractal, it should nonetheless give insight not only into congregational life and development, but also into the life and development of a disciple.

Life is found in relationship. As we tend to our relationships, as we initiate, mend, and deepen our relationship with God and neighbor, we find life as individuals (disciples) and as a community of faith (church). The portrait we draw must depict these three unique, overlapping, and equally important processes. One way of depicting this is to draw three equal and unique shapes coming together to form a new single shape. These three shapes cannot come together completely. They must retain their uniqueness while relating in such a way that they create through their relating something new.

The triquetra is an ancient symbol used often to depict divinity. It is formed by overlapping three equal diameter circles. The intersecting arcs create the triquetra. In Figure 5, the triquetra is formed by tracing the three arcs that outline each of the four shaded regions.

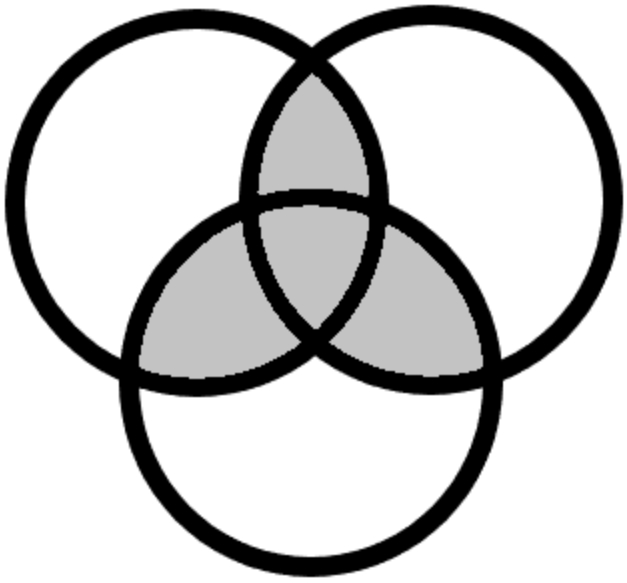

Figure 5. Three Overlapping Circles & Triquetra

This shape was adopted by Celtic Christians to illustrate the trinitarian nature of God. It is commonly referred to as the "Trinity Knot." This image of three overlapping circles and the resulting triquetra (the place where the circles overlap and relate) is a visual representation of how three unique processes (three circles) can come together to reveal something new (one triquetra).

The RGB (Red-Green-Blue) Color Wheel adds another layer of meaning to this image. The RGB Color Wheel is used to depict the creation of color using light. It depicts the colors generated by adding light, as opposed to when white light is reflected off an object. With additive light, red, green, and blue are primary colors. When all three colors are combined (added) in equal proportion, they create white light. The secondary colors are yellow (red plus green), cyan (green plus blue), and magenta (blue plus red). Using this color scheme illustrates well the coming together of the circles. In places

where only two circles overlap, we have secondary colors. These secondary colors fill the appendages of the triquetra. Where all three circles equally overlap in the center of the triquetra, the color is white. White is a deeply symbolic color in the Christian tradition, denoting purity, holiness, and life. In our portrayal, it is here, in the relating of the three, that life is found.

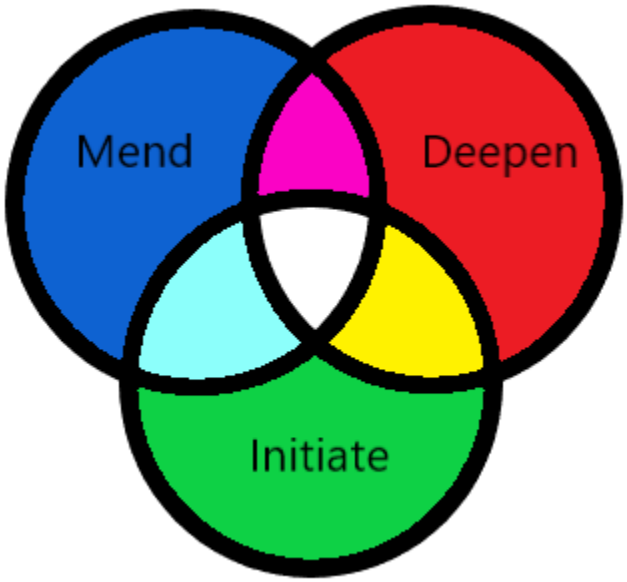

Figure 6. Vitality through Relationship (Juncker)

Healthy disciples and healthy congregations initiate relationship (green circle), mend relationship (blue circle), and deepen relationship (red circle). Just as the persons of the Trinity "are without interval between them and inseparable and their mutual indwelling is without confusion,"[117] so these three processes are inseparable, inter-

[117] John of Damascus, *The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 37, *Saint John of Damascus: Writings*, trans. Frederic H. Chase, Jr. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1958), 202.

related, and yet unique. Health and vitality are found as these three processes operate together not unlike the perichoretic community of the Trinity. Congregations become unstable and necrotic as they fail or refuse to initiate new relationships, are unwilling to reconcile broken relationships, and neglect existing relationships. Disciples experience hell and death in varying degrees as they refuse to reach out to those they do not know and/or do not understand, fail to forgive and mend relationship, and seek nothing but superficial interactions with God and neighbor. It is only as disciples and churches tend to their relationships—initiating, mending, and deepening relationships—that they will begin to reflect the divine life into the world and live into the very telos of creation—relationship.

Initiate Relationship (Green)

Congregations and disciples that intentionally seek to initiate relationship are constantly reaching beyond the familiar to meet the other. To initiate relationship is to extend what Anthony B. Robinson calls "hospitality" by which the other is allowed to remain uniquely different.[118] Hospitality should not be understood to be a passive welcoming-in no matter how warm or well-intentioned the act may be. Hospitality is an active reaching out to those we do not know. It is about initiating new relationships with the stranger.

[118] Robinson, *Transforming Congregations*, 108.

If Christ is fully human, then we can only come to see Christ's face as we learn to relate, to initiate relationships, with the fullness of humanity. In the full diversity of humanity, we come to know Jesus.

Relationships cannot be coerced or forced. As we initiate relationship—show hospitality—and allow the other to remain other, we must allow the other the freedom not to relate. Initiating relationship is not about "claiming people for the kingdom," as if the kingdom of God is established by tallies. Initiating relationship is about being present and open to the other. It is about being a conspicuous presence to the never-failing love of God (cf. Psalm 136 and Lamentations 3:22-23).

Mend Relationship (Blue)

We are sinful. We struggle to relate. The shards of failed relationships pierce deep. Disciples of Jesus Christ and the church have a responsibility to do their part in mending broken relationship. That does not mean that we should meddle in the brokenness of other people's lives, sticking our noses in other people's business. It does mean that we should be attentive to the consequences of our own relational failures. We should be quick to listen and forgive, extending mercy and grace in an effort to mend all that is broken.

Mending relationship does not mean that we force things back together. It acknowledges (confesses) the brokenness and seeks amends. Mending relationship cannot be done by coercing or forcing the broken pieces together; rather, it seeks to turn the pieces so that they might find a way to come back together.

Deepen Relationship (Red)

Vital congregations and disciples of Jesus Christ are intentional about growing closer and deepening relationship. Deeping relationship is about knowledge and intimacy. Deepening relationship is about learning more and more about the other (God and neighbor), but it is also about proximity. One can learn about something from afar, but if we are to be serious about deepening our relationship with others, then we must be willing to enter their world and sit with them where they are, even in the dark of hell.

The prayer attributed to St. Francis offers direction for what is required for deepening our relationships. It is about seeking "not so much…to be consoled as to console; to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love."[119] It is about striving to see one another and our realities clearly that we might be fully known. There is both a yearning to know more about the other, but also a vulnerability in allowing oneself to be fully known.

Conclusion

Relationship is the basic pattern of all life. The church is called to model and help people live into relationship. The church is meant to be a drawing—a drawing toward God and one another. This drawing is given depth and dimension as we (individually as disciples *and* corporately as the church) initiate, mend, and deepen our relationships.

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[119] Francis of Assisi, "Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi" in *The United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), 481.

With this portrait in mind, we turn to the question of how to help people live into this image of intentional relationality.

CHAPTER THREE

Learning to Draw

Make your ways known to me, LORD;
teach me your paths.
Lead me in your truth—teach it to me.[120]

Learning to draw takes practice. We must master the basic shapes before creating our Mona Lisa. Our education begins with circles and squares, moves to spheres and cubes, then to something more complex like a bowl of fruit. We do not learn to draw simply by understanding shape and form in some cognitive, theoretical way. Such learning is helpful, but the primary way in which we learn to draw is by taking pencil to paper. As we practice drawing these basic shapes and forms, our motions become less methodical. We think less about the pressure we are applying to the pencil, think less about deconstructing the object we are trying to draw into its basic forms, and effortlessly place image to paper. The pencil seems to work its way around the page to create what the artist conceives. The more we practice the easier and more natural the task becomes. This is particularly true of music students and repeated practice. Benjamin Zander, in a 2008 TED Talk entitled "The transformative power of classical music," makes this point at the piano.

[120] Psalm 25:4-5a, *Common English Bible*.

Every beginning student, demonstrates Zander in his presentation, plays the piano impulsively. Every note is emphasized. The student, trying to keep the beat, recognizes the note they are supposed to play and with barely enough time before the count of the next beat thrusts the piano key down. Their whole body can seem to jerk as they strain to play each note. The process continues with the next note as the student awkwardly meanders through the rest of the song. As the student takes lessons and practices for another year, the impulse moves from every note to every other note. In another year, the impulses move to every fourth note. After another year, the impulses move to every eighth note. If the student does not give up, there will finally be a point when there is only one impulse that moves through the entire song. Zander explains, "what happened was not maybe what you thought, which is, [the student] suddenly became passionate, engaged, involved, got a new teacher, he hit puberty, or whatever it is. What actually happened was the impulses were reduced."[121] The playing became more natural. The student no longer had to think about each note. Through regular practice, the student's playing (recognition of the notes and pushing of the keys) became a conditioned, habituated response. As the student practices, the responses become more and more habituated until the student no longer must think through every note of the song; instead, the student can simply play without thinking and journey through the world the composer has created.

[121] Benjamin Zander, "The transformative power of classical music," filmed February 2008 in Monterey, CA, TED video, 20:40, https://www.ted.com/talks/benjamin_zander_the_transformative_power_of_classical_music.

We are formed by practice. The things we do, argues James K. A. Smith, create a habitus through which we understand and interact with our world on a pre-theortetical level. We are not primarily thinking things, but habituated actors. We act in the world based upon normalized, practical (as in practiced) responses and not always based upon rational determinism. "We are in the world primarily as *doers*, not thinkers—and even our thinking serves, and grows out of, our doing."[122] What we do impacts how we perceive and make meaning in the world around us; therefore, argues Smith, we must be mindful of our practices. "We are disposed to act in certain ways, toward certain ends, by the inertia of the habitus we've absorbed."[123]

Liturgy shapes and molds our habitus. Liturgy is both poetic and kinesthetic. "Liturgies work affectively and aesthetically—they grab hold of our guts through the power of image, story, and metaphor. That's why the most powerful liturgies are attuned to our embodiment; they speak to our senses; they get under our skin."[124] Liturgies not only help provide a defining narrative from which we can understand and relate to the world around us, they also comport our bodies to walk in that world according to the story. Humans are "liturgical animals."

> We are metaphorical animals, imaginative animals, poetic animals, "storied" animals. We act in the world more as characters in a drama than as soldiers dutifully following a command. We are acting out a script,

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[122] James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 113

[123] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 138.

[124] James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2016), 46.

> improvising in an unfolding drama, taking on a character in a story that has captivated us at a level we might not even be aware of. We come to "see" ourselves in a certain way, not by introspection or reflection, but because we have absorbed a narrative that now functions as the background drama of our existence. So it's not so much that I "see" myself in this way as that I *act* in accord with the character I've assumed. This is not an identity that I have chosen; it is more like an orientation I have assumed—a mode of comportment to the world that grows out of my implicit, tacit sense of who I am within an overarching story of the world.[125]

Liturgy not only creates the backdrop for the story; liturgy places us in the story. It brings story to life through us. Liturgy moves us to incarnate a story.

Liturgies are not employed for religious ends alone. There are many secular liturgies[126] vying for our attention (and our bodies!). Secular liturgies can easily direct our lives to ends other than the vision God holds before us. "The list of such 'secular' liturgies is very contextual and will vary not only from country to country but from generation to generation."[127] Given the many liturgies that threaten to pull us in varying

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[125] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 127.

[126] In *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, Smith argues that "there is no secular. If humans are essentially liturgical animals, and cultural institutions are liturgical institutions, then there is no 'secular' (a-religious or nonreligious) institutions. By describing them as 'secular' liturgies, I'm heuristically conceding to some common habits of thought." James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009, 88n20. For Smith, we are constantly being formed by the storied practices we do. Secular liturgies form people in ways contrary to the telos God desires. The question for Smith is not if we are formed by these liturgical practices, but how. The end to which God calls us is relationship. With this understanding, we can define secular liturgies as those storied practices that malform, impede, and/or thwart our ability to live in right relationship with God, neighbor, and creation.

[127] Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 54.

directions, Smith suggests that we pause for a "liturgical examen." The point of this exercise is to evaluate the things we do so that we can better understand the stories into which we may otherwise be unconsciously living. Smith writes:

> Look at your daily, weekly, monthly, and annual routines. What are the things you do that do something *to* you? What are the secular liturgies in your life? What vision of the good life is carried in those liturgies? What Story is embedded in those cultural practices? What kind of person do they want you to become? To what kingdom are these rituals aimed? What does this cultural institution want you to *love*?[128]

As we begin to see the ways in which we are formed by the assumptions of the secular liturgies we are adopting, we can then seek to immerse ourselves in a new story through other liturgies.[129] Just as liturgies can disorder our lives and draw us away from God's vision, so our lives can be "reordered (recalibrated) by counterliturgies—embodied, communal practices that are 'loaded' with the gospel and indexed to God and his kingdom."[130]

The end to which Christianity calls us is relationship with God, neighbor, and creation. If we are to live into this telos, then we must practice liturgies that train us for relationship. Christians experience counterliturgies and are reoriented toward God's vision through corporate worship. "Worship is the heart of discipleship because it is the

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[128] Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 55.

[129] Chapter 4 provides a "liturgical examen" of sorts to use in evaluating what we do (as disciples and as a congregation) and if it is helping us live into God's vision of relationship.

[130] Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 57-58.

gymnasium in which God retrains our hearts."[131] It is in this communal act that the story of a relational God is planted in our hearts and we are retrained to relate—to initiate, mend, and deepen relationship. For the church to live into God's vision, the church must envision its worship as storied relational enactments (liturgies) that train the congregation for relationship within and beyond the gathered community.

Relational Worship

Worship is, by its very nature, relational. It is the gathering where God is revealed through word and sacrament (cf. Luke 24). It is "a dialogical encounter, a loving conversation between God and the people of God."[132] Worship is the place where we are given the opportunity to see and experience, to relate, face-to-face with God and neighbor. As Debra Rienstra and Ron Rienstra point out, worship should be a "kind of ongoing dialogue [between God and people *and* person and person] that characterizes any loving relationship."[133] Too often worship falls short of this ideal. Worshippers arrive after worship has started and make a quick exit after the final blessing and dismissal. Soren Kierkegaard's critique of worship is spot on in that too often worship is a performance of the preacher and choir (or band or lector) for the congregation who finds

[131] Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 77.

[132] Debra Rienstra and Ron Rienstra, *Worship Words: Discipling Language for Faithful Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 44.

[133] Rienstra, *Worship Words*, 45.

itself as the audience.[134] The most we see of each other as we sit in our straight rows is the backs and sides of people's heads. The worship moment is something to be consumed individually rather than an opportunity to relate and find community. Too often, worship is a spectacle and not a face-to-face interaction with God and neighbor.

George Sanders, in "*Panem et circenses:* Worship and the spectacle," argues that must of Protestant and Evangelical worship today has become a spectacle that perpetuates the values of capitalism and consumerism endemic to American culture. "The spectacle reinforces the dominant values of a given culture."[135] It is important to note that Sanders is not singling out any specific *form* of worship (i.e. "traditional," "contemporary," "indigenous," "blended," etc.), but instead makes the argument that worship in our *time* is a spectacle:

> The spectacle can be found in an array of worship settings—whether it is in the form of expansive video screens, highly polished musical and theatrical performances, the use of stage props to amplify and punctuate speakers' messages, the impressively wide variety of consumer options facing the worshipper or the deluge of crowds filling voluminous auditoriums. To create the spectacle, many churches have consolidated various elements from retail and entertainment sectors and have begun engaging worshippers in ways that resemble other forms of consumerism.[136]

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[134] Kierkegaard's critique of worship can be found in Anthony B. Robinson, *Transforming Congregational Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 45-46.

[135] George Sanders, "Panem Et Circenses: Worship and the Spectacle," *Culture and Religion* 13, no. 1 (2012): 14.

[136] Sanders, "Panem Et Circenses," 2.

In the words of James K. A. Smith, the church has co-opted liturgies of consumerism in an attempt to share the faith; but, changing the veneer of such liturgies, shrouding secular enactments and posturing in religious language and symbols, does not rob those secular liturgies of their power to secularize. What we find in many current worship practices, argues Sanders, is a mediated religious experience that we consume for our amusement. The words of Ludwig Feuerbach, a 19th century German philosopher, are prophetic: the contemporary Christian, attracted by the spectacle, "prefers the sign to the thing signified, the copy to the original, fancy to reality, the appearance to the essence…in these days *illusion* only is *sacred*, *truth profane*."[137]

In "The Challenging Climate for US Congregations," Scott Thumma observes that there is a growing number of Christians concentrated in large congregations: 64% of weekly Christian worship attenders in the United States are participating in communities of faith with an average weekend attendance of more than 250 persons; 31% of all weekly attenders worship in communities averaging over 1,000 persons. Thumma notes:

> This concentration of people in the largest congregations brings with it greater physical and financial resources, advantages of buildings, skills, programs, child and youth ministries, and many other attractional dynamics that make their sustained growth more likely. This proportional imbalance has gotten worse throughout the past century, but…the last two decades have greatly amplified this dynamic… Essentially, the largest congregations are increasingly dominating the "religious marketplace"

[137] Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. Marian Evans (London: Trubner & Co., 1881), xiii. Italics in the original.

> while smaller faith communities are declining in size, resources and membership at a rapid rate.[138]

How does the normalization of these large gatherings impact how we understand and practice faith? To be certain, followers of Christ have always gathered in large groups; however, the way in which we interact in such spaces has greatly changed over time. Large gatherings, more than ever, are aided (*mediated* might be a better word) by technology. Sanders reflects upon his experience in one such worship setting.

> I oftentimes found that my gaze was directed at the screens rather than the choir, preacher or speaker. Perhaps more telling, this was true even when the performer was in close proximity or within a direct line of sight. In other words, even when I was sitting close to the front and near the centre of a space, I would often turn my head to watch a screen that was to the side or refocus my vision to a screen that was directly behind a performer. Upon reflection, this was almost always, at the outset of my research, anyway, not deliberate. And while I never conducted a head count, the majority of the churchgoers appeared to follow suit. Furthermore, there appeared to be no age-related (or any other apparent) correlation since so many other people behaved similarly. In my experience, screens largely disregard social variables, as the spectacle's power feigns social engagement or fellowship, as it indiscriminately draws in its spectators/consumers.[139]

Sanders' observations raise an important question: can these worship events be anything but a spectacle? Can gathering more than 250 people (or 1,000+ people!), in our time (or any time for that matter), be anything but spectacular? Thumma's observations lead to another question that is largely beyond the scope of this project, but needs to be stated:

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[138] Scott Thumma, "The Challenging Climate for US Congregations," Faith Communities Today, February 11, 2020, https://faithcommunitiestoday.org/challenging-climate-us-congregations/.

[139] Sanders, "Panem Et Circenses," 10.

can Christian worship be anything but a spectacle?[140] Suffice to say, I think it can. Worship can be more than a mediated, consumeristic experience. Worship can draw us face-to-face with God and our neighbors, but for this to happen, we must re-envision worship as relational.

To live fully into God's vision, the church's worship practices will need to include liturgies that instill the counter-cultural value of face-to-face interaction instead of mediated relationship, reality over escapist illusion. As James K. A. Smith argues, "Worship isn't a weekly retreat from reality into some escapist enclave; it is our induction into 'the real world.' Worship is the space in which we learn to take the right things for granted."[141] Worship trains us to understand and interact in our world. It helps us to see. Worship has the power to instill new values and ways of understanding. As the spectacle of worship is reimagined to be relationally generative and sustaining of relationships, a new set of values will emerge that stand in sharp contrast to our consumeristic, spectacular culture.

Every aspect of worship must be reimagined intentionally as an opportunity for relationship—to be brought face-to-face with God and one another. The space,

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[140] Tex Sample, in *The Spectacle of Worship in a Wired World: Electronic Culture and the Gathered People of God* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), argues that Christians should be careful in creating a spectacle. He assumes that worship must be spectacular if it is to engage people who otherwise live in a world of spectacle. Sample could not have predicted when the text was written (22 years ago!) how social media would change the way in which we understand ourselves and our relationships. I wonder if he would stand in defense of his conclusions today, or if he would argue that the spectacle we have made of worship has drawn us away from worship's primary purpose.

[141] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 2-3.

gathering, prayer, reading of scripture, sermon, communion, and sending must intentionally invite people to relate—to initiate, mend, and/or deepen relationship—with God and neighbor. Worship is where we learn to see face-to-face; and, as Smith notes, "it is, to some extent *only* in such practices that this can happen."[142] What follows is an attempt to re-envision these aspects of worship relationally. It is important to note that these visions of relational worship are not meant to be prescriptive in the sense that they define what *must* be done for relationships to grow; rather, these visions are descriptive of what *can* be done to enable worship to be more relational. Chapter 4 will discuss ways of evaluating whether our practice is helping us initiate, mend, and deepen relationship.

Envisioning Our Space

The most efficient way to seat many people in a rectangular room is by seating them in straight rows. This is the traditional seating arrangement used in most churches. It positions worshippers so that their bodies are all facing the same direction. It directs people toward what is in front of them, instead of beside them. It sends a clear message that our focus is to be forward. This arrangement allows for anonymity. The only people seeing worshippers' faces are the worship leaders. In some sense this posturing allows the worship experience to be a personal interaction between the worshipper and God. This arrangement does not allow for easy interaction between worshippers. While

[142] Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 13.

attempts might be made during the worship experience to encourage face-to-face interaction, the focus will ultimately turn back to the front.

If people are going to see face-to-face, we must rethink the worship space and how people sit in it. The space for worship could be reconfigured so that people can see their neighbors face-to-face rather than the backs of their heads. Sitting in a "U" shape or facing one another (making the center aisle the center of the room instead of a highway between the chancel and the exit) is one way to position the congregation intentionally so that they are given an opportunity to see face-to-face. Such posturing is more conducive to personal interaction through eye contact and conversation. It shortens the physical distance between people, making the room feel smaller and more intimate. It allows people to not only see one another, but to also hear one another as voices are joined in prayer, song, and conversation. It reduces the possibility of remaining anonymous.

Envisioning Our Coming Together

The United Methodist Book of Worship notes that worship does not begin with the announcements, call to worship, or opening hymn. Worship "begins when the people begin to gather for worship."[143] The conversations people have as they enter the building and the handshakes of an usher or greeter are not peripheral experiences, but the initiating acts of worship. "This renewing of community is a part of our entrance into

[143] *The United Methodist Book of Worship* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1992), 16.

congregational worship and should not be discouraged."[144] When done well, these acts of welcome and reception begin the process of seeing face-to-face. They set the tone for what is to come.

In a culture where we are finding it increasingly difficult to relate in face-to-face ways, the worshipping body must be invited and reminded to reconnect and relate to God and neighbor. [145] "The opening actions of a worship service should clearly establish worship's purpose."[146] If the purpose of worship is to help us tend to our relationships—to initiate, mend, and deepen our relationships with God and neighbor—so that we might live into the relational telos of creation, then we must be explicit about that from the start.

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[144] *The United Methodist Book of Worship*, 17.

[145] For interesting commentary on the growing crisis of seeing and interacting face-to-face see: Sarah Knapton, "Facebook users have 155 friends—but would trust just four in a crisis," The Telegraph, January 20, 2016, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/science/science-news/12108412/Facebook-users-have-155-friends-but-would-trust-just-four-in-a-crisis.html; Margaret Wheatley, *Who Do We Choose to Be? Facing Reality, Claiming Leadership, Restoring Sanity* (Oakland: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2017). Damon Krukowski, in "Ways of Hearing: Listening in a Digital Age," explains how the loss of shared, communal time has impacted the music world as it moved from analog to digital audio. In analog recordings, there is a sense of shared time. It is organic. You get it all in real time. Digital time is rigid: it can be tweaked, added to, and filtered. The digital revolution, argues Krukowski, beginning in the 1980s in music, has transformed the way in which we listen and understand time. I cannot help to think that similar observations could be made of digital contacts. They too, void of a shared time and space, make us re-evaluate what it means to be in relationship. Is such an interaction even worthy of the term? David Krukowski, "Ways of Hearing," August 1, 2017, in 99% Invisible, produced by Damon Krukowski, Max Larkin and Ian Cross, podcast, 40:16, http://99percentinvisible.org/episode/ways-of-hearing/.

[146] *The Worship Sourcebook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 45.

One way of accomplishing this task could be to make the Call to Worship a relational reminder and summons. One example might be:

We gather in expectation.
Jesus said
where two or more are gathered in his name
he is there.
We gather with hope
that the things that separate us
from God and one another
will be no more.
With hope and expectation
we come seeking peace,
yearning to see God and our neighbor face to face.
With hope and expectation, O God,
we have gathered.
Make yourself known among us.
Help us to see!

This relational call frames worship and helps set participants' expectations of what is to follow. We are called into worship so that we may come to see God and one another face to face. This is an invitation to glimpse, if only for a moment, God's vision.

Envisioning Our Prayer

In "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," John Wesley notes that just as the body needs air to survive, the soul needs prayer. Prayer opens us to God's grace. "God's command to 'pray without ceasing ' is founded on the necessity we have of his grace to preserve the life of God in the soul, which can no more subsist one moment without it,

than the body can without air."[147] Prayer sustains our spiritual well-being. It keeps us open to God's love and leading. It grounds us in the ways of God—relationship.

To borrow from Samuel Wells, prayer is an earnest attempt to "be with"—to relate. Prayer, especially intercessory prayer, is also an act of compassion. Compassionate prayer draws people together such that they can identify with each other's needs. It seeks not only to name what another is going through, but also enables the one praying to identify with another through their joys, their concerns, their trials such that their joys, concerns, and trials are shared. Compassionate prayer is a self-less act that draws us, and those we pray for, closer together and closer to God.

> As disciples of the compassionate Christ, who assumed the condition of a slave and suffered death for our sake (Ph 2:7-8), there are no boundaries to our prayers. Dietrich Bonhoeffer expresses this with powerful simplicity when he writes that to pray for others is to give them "the same right we have received, namely, to stand before Christ and share in his mercy." When we come before God with the needs of the world, the healing love of the Holy Spirit touches us and touches all those we bring before God with the same power. Compassionate prayer does not encourage the self-serving individualism that leads us to flee from people or to fight them. On the contrary, by deepening our awareness of our common suffering, prayer draws us closer together in the healing presence of the Holy Spirit.[148]

Relational prayer seeks and hopes for relationship. Wells notes, "Being with' depends on the patience, humility, and hope that are shaped around the eschatological fulfillment of God and the anticipatory glimpses of that fulfillment brought by the work of the Holy

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[147] John Wesley, "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 438.

[148] Henri J. M. Nouwen, Donald P. McNeil, and Douglas A. Morrison, *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life* (New York: Doubleday, 2005), 109-110.

Spirit."[149] Yearning for these glimpses of God's vision fulfilled lead us to pray for the world, our community and neighborhoods, our friends and family, and ourselves.

As people of faith,
we hope for peace—
a day when the wolf will lie with the lamb,
and the leopard will lie down with the young goat (Isaiah 11:6a);
a day when swords are beaten into iron plows
and spears into pruning tools (Isaiah 11:2a).
We yearn for the day
when there will be no mourning, crying, or pain anymore,
when God will wipe away every tear from our eyes,
when death itself is vanquished (Revelation 21:4).
Until that day comes,
we pray.

We pray for our world,
our community and neighborhoods,
our friends and families,
and ourselves
that God's will may be done
and all may experience peace with God and one another.
Let us pray.

Together, let us pray for our world…

Silent and extemporaneous prayers are offered by the people for the world.

Together, let us pray for our community and neighborhoods…

Silent and extemporaneous prayers are offered by the people for their community and neighborhoods.

Together, let us pray for our friends and families…

Silent and extemporaneous prayers are offered by the people for their friends and families.

Together, let us pray for ourselves…

[149] Wells, *A Nazareth Manifesto*, 292.

Silent and extemporaneous prayers are offered by the people for themselves.

Loving God, we trust that you hear our prayers and deepest longings.
Be with us and those for whom we pray.
Draw us all closer to you and closer to one another
that together we may know the nearness of your Reign
and live with hope.
Amen.

A key aspect of this style of intercessory prayer is its opportunity for communal participation. The call and response style when coupled with open-ended petitions allows people to participate actively in the prayer by lending their voice and concerns to the prayer. The open-ended petitions also give space for silence and therefore an opportunity for people to listen to God and one another. Silence is a reminder that prayer is not just about the words we say, but the quiet we enter as we seek God's vision in our lives, with our friends and families, in our communities, neighborhoods, and world.

Envisioning Our Reading

Scripture, while it "containeth all things necessary for salvation,"[150] is primarily a story—a testament to God's steadfast love and our struggle to relate. Jane Rogers Vann, in *Worship Matters: A Study for Congregations*, notes that "although many stories in Scripture make up the Christian story, it is, in reality, one very long yet coherent story in which God initiates encounter with the chosen people in order to bring about redemption and blessing for all the families of the earth. It is this story that the whole of the liturgy is

[150] *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2016), 66.

aiming to proclaim."[151] Reading the story together provides an opportunity for us to enter the narrative arc of God's mighty acts of salvation. The story is *not* simply an historical account of the past, it is the ongoing story of God's people now. As the story for and about the people of God, the people of God should proclaim and share that story in the present. This can be accomplished by using multiple readers from among the congregation.

In a congregation where the reading has been shared ahead of time and people have been able to familiarize themselves with the text, this time of joint proclamation of scripture could be introduced as follows:

> Our reading this morning comes from _____.
> You are invited to help proclaim God's Word.
> I will begin by reading a few verses of the passage.
> You can pick up the reading where I leave off.
> Read for as long as you like.
> Someone will pick up where you left off
> and the pattern will continue
> until the entire passage has been read.
>
> Hear now from the story of God's people…
>
> *Once the passage has been read, the worship leader may say:*
>
> This is the Word of God
> for us all.
> **Thanks be to God. Amen.**

If the reading has not been broadly shared with the entire worshipping community or congregants do not read and familiarize themselves with the text ahead of time, several

[151] Jane Rogers Vann, *Worship Matters: A Study for Congregations* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 113.

pre-selected readers could be used to proclaim the scriptures while standing among the gathered community to much the same affect. In such a context, the reading could be introduced as follows:

> Our reading this morning comes from _____.
> Hear now from the story of God's people…
>
> Once the passage has been read, a reader may say:
> This is the Word of God
> for us all.
> **Thanks be to God. Amen.**

The reading could also be spoken by a single reader, using the formulation above. If using a single voice to proclaim the story, care must be taken to ensure that the individuals speaking at each service reflect the diversity of voices in the community—voices of every generation, language, sex, ethnicity, race, etc. Scripture should be read and offered communally so that, through the multi-voiced retelling of the story—whether the story is spoken by many voices at a single service or by a diversity of voices over many services—is proclaimed for all, by all, and among all.

Envisioning Our Sermon

A sermon that models relationship (and not simply speaks about relationship) could be delivered as a dialogue, or discussion, and not as a monologue. In some sense, preaching is always a dialogue and invitation into a conversation, but too often it can be experienced as a pontificating monologue with little room for congregants actively to engage, probe, and question the preacher in the moment. To deliver the message unilaterally can too easily reinforce the idea that the pastor is the one who tells the people

what to do. Dialogical preaching is "a cooperative activity on the part of congregation and preacher. The dialogical preacher knows that he cannot preach the gospel by himself."[152] Lucy Rose Atkinson, in *Sharing the Word: Preaching in the Roundtable Church*, explains:

> The preacher and the congregation are colleagues, exploring together the mystery of the Word for their own lives, as well as the life of the congregation, the larger church, and the world. The preacher and the congregation gather symbolically at a round table without head or foot, where labels like clergy and laity disappear and where believing or wanting to believe is all that matters. Here the preacher is neither the expert in scriptural interpretation nor the answer-person in matters of faith. Here the preacher is simply the one responsible for putting the text and the sermon as one interpretation into the midst of the community for the particular service of worship.[153]

In short, dialogical preaching seeks to draw upon the wisdom and experience of the people gathered. It does not assume that the preacher has all the answers; instead, the preacher is seeking to relate too, and needs the wisdom and input of the people of God to do it well. The power of such preaching is twofold: 1) it provides room for the Holy Spirit to speak through our neighbor in such a way that may surprise and challenge us (even, and especially, the preacher); and, 2) it is an attempt at ensuring that no one walks away confused or thinking the experience irrelevant because each has been given an open-ended opportunity to participate and wrestle with faith in community. See Appendix 4 for a dialogical preaching example.

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[152] Reuel L. Howe, *Partners in Preaching: Clergy and Laity in Dialogue* (New York: Seabury Press, 1967), 79.

[153] Lucy Atkinson Rose, *Sharing the Word: Preaching in the Roundtable Church* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 4.

Envisioning Our Communion

Gathering and celebrating communion at the Lord's Table is the keystone of relational worship. At the Lord's Table we embody and experience a taste of God's vision. Through the act of Holy Communion, we are brought face-to-face with God and neighbor.

> To participate is to receive a foretaste of the future, a pledge of heaven "until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet" ([*The United Methodist Hymnal*]; page 10) … When we eat and drink at the Table, we become partakers of the divine nature in this life and for life eternal (John 6:47-58; Revelation 3:20). We are anticipating the heavenly banquet celebrating God's victory over sin, evil, and death (Matthew 22:1-14; Revelation 19:9; 21:1-7). In the midst of the personal and systemic brokenness in which we live, we yearn for everlasting fellowship with Christ and ultimate fulfillment of the divine plan.[154]

Communion binds us together with God and one another that we may live into God's vision now, though always in part, until that day when it is fully realized. Participation in this holy meal, through the presence of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, helps to acclimate God's people to the world as God desires it.

In his sermon, "The Duty of Constant Communion," John Wesley encourages us to consider participation in the Lord's Supper as an act of Divine mercy whereby we are invited to live into right relationship with God and neighbor.

> As God, whose mercy is over all his works, and particularly over the children of men, knew there was but one way for man to be happy like himself; namely, by being like him in holiness; as he knew we could do

[154] "This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion" in *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church: 2016* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2016), 736.

> nothing towards this of ourselves, he has given us certain means of obtaining his help. One of these is the Lord's Supper, which, of his infinite mercy, he hath given for this very end; that through this means we may be assisted to attain those blessings which he hath prepared for us; that we may obtain holiness on earth, and everlasting glory in heaven.[155]

Holiness of heart and life, what Wesley often referred to as "Christian perfection," is "the humble, gentle, patient love of God, and our neighbour, ruling our tempers, words, and actions."[156] Holiness leads us into glory—"God being God and God being with us"[157]—recognized now only in part, but fully into eternity.

While the United Methodist Church allows some variation in the liturgy of communion, the basic format is standardized. The liturgy is, first, a prayer of thanks and praise offered by all the participants of worship. "The prayer is shaped by our Trinitarian understanding of the nature of God. It includes an introductory dialogue, thankful remembrance of God's mighty acts of creation and the salvation made possible through Jesus Christ, the institution of the Lord's Supper, invoking of the present work of the Holy Spirit, and concluding praise to the Trinity."[158] All who seek a relationship with God, all who seek to change their hearts and lives (to repent) and experience the

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[155] John Wesley, "Sermon CI. The Duty of Constant Communion," The Works of John Wesley, 3rd ed., vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 150.

[156] John Wesley, "Brief Thoughts on Christian Perfection," The Works of John Wesley, 3rd ed., vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 446.

[157] Well, *A Nazareth Manifesto*, 142.

[158] "This Holy Mystery," 750-751.

assurance of God's grace, all who seek to live at peace with God and neighbor are invited to Christ's table.

One of the ways to help the congregation more fully embody the relationality of communion could be to, at the conclusion of the meal, have everyone stand, hold hands, and sing:

> Glory to God in the highest,
> sing glory to God
> Glory to God in the highest,
> and peace to God's people on earth.

While this is not the traditional placement of the Gloria, its placement here makes explicit the peace we experience in and through communion coupled by the hope of peace for all God's people. By holding hands, we incarnate the liturgy and stand as a sign of peace and unity, a very real glimpse of God's vision fulfilled. Other hymns and choruses that express the peace found in/through communion could be used in place of the Gloria. One example could be "Where Charity and Love Prevail," verses two and five:

> Where charity and love prevail,
> there God is ever found;
> brought here together by Christ's love,
> by love are we thus bound.
>
> Let us recall that in our midst
> dwells God's begotten Son;
> as members of his body joined,
> we are in him made one.[159]

Another way of helping the congregation embody the relationality of communion could be for communicants to serve the bread and cup and proclaim to one another, "the body

[159] *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 549.

of Christ broken *for you*" and "the blood of Christ shed *for you*." Yet another option could be to offer a prayer that highlights relationship:

> Gracious God,
> we thank you for the love
> that brings us food from heaven,
> gives us the life of your dear Son,
> and assures us that we belong
> to the company of all his faithful people
> in heaven and on earth.
>
> Grant that, strengthened by this fellowship
> and by the power of his Holy Spirit,
> we may continue his work in the world,
> until we come
> to the glory of your eternal kingdom;
> through the same Jesus Christ,
> your Son, our Lord. Amen.[160]

Envisioning Our Departure

As the congregation prepares to depart, it needs to be reminded one last time of the vision Scripture holds before it. The gathered community of faith needs to be reminded that the practice of worship is the task of everyday life—relationship. Even, and especially, as it goes forth, the church is called to go into the world offering glimpses of God's future by tending relationships—by initiating, mending, and deepening their relationships with God and the people with whom they come into contact.

One way of accomplishing this might be to, at the conclusion of worship, encourage the congregation to stand hand-in-hand as a visible sign of their unity with each other and with God (recall "The Drawing," Figure 1, from chapter 2). At the

[160] *The Worship Sourcebook*, 346-347.

conclusion of worship, with the congregation standing hand in hand, a worship leader could say:

> Look around you.
> The reign of God has come near.
> Christ dwells among us.
> He is here,
> as we stand beside one another,
> hold onto, listen,
> and seek to love one another.
>
> As we leave this place,
> know that the Christ who is here
> goes with you and will remain by your side.
> So, go in peace;
> but, not before you share it with one another.
>
> The peace of Christ be with you.
> **And also with you.**
> Amen.

The traditional placement, in the United Methodist rite, of the Peace is immediately following the prayer of confession and assurance of pardon. "The Peace is an act of reconciliation and blessing, based on New Testament Christian practice (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14)."[161] The placement of The Peace at the conclusion of worship emphasizes the Peace as a time of individual blessing. An alternative form of greeting could be: "The peace of Christ go with you." In either formulation, the purpose is clear, worshippers are sent forth into the world with the peace of Christ.

[161] *The United Methodist Book of Worship,* 26.

This open-ended nature of closing worship, by offering the peace of Christ for an indefinite amount of time, can be confusing for some worshippers. To help people navigate this time and know that worship has ended, it might be helpful for the pastor to make her way to the back of the sanctuary. It may also be helpful to play a simple chorus, like an "Amen," as people greet one another. This act of passing the peace, at the very end of worship is the first act we are called to in the world—to extend the peace of Christ beyond the boundaries of the gathered community.

Conclusion

We learn to draw—to live into God's relational vision—through the practice of worship. Worship is where we learn to see, understand, and interact in the world. It is where we are trained to relate. Every aspect of the worship experience can be re-envisioned for this task. As our hearts, minds, and bodies are trained to relate through worship, we glimpse God's reign among God's people and learn to see and yearn for its coming in the world beyond the church. While several ways of envisioning worship as relational are explored above, the creation of a relational worship resource book could go a long way in equipping the church for the essential work of helping worshippers tend to their relationships in and beyond the church. How can we know if our training is working? Is there a way to evaluate our relational "effectiveness" as individuals and as a community? It is to these questions that we turn in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER FOUR

Coloring Church

Let your light shine before people,
so they can see the good things you do
and praise your Father who is in heaven.[162]

Christians are called to tend attentively to their relationships. Faithful discipleship involves intentionally initiating, mending, and deepening relationship. Living in relationship is the telos of creation—a relational God created relational beings to be in relationship with one another and God. Worship is the practice field on which followers of Jesus learn to live in relationship. In chapter 2, I introduced one way of depicting this intentional relationality by drawing three equal-diameter circles that overlap (see "Figure 6. Vitality through Relationship [Juncker]"). The circles are colored with the primary colors of the RGB color wheel. Green, blue, and red symbolize, respectively, the processes of initiating, mending, and deepening relationship. As we consider how to evaluate individual discipleship and a congregation's vitality, it is helpful to understand these circles as sources of light. As a disciple begins to enact intentionally these three processes, their "life" will "emit" various shades of each color, The light from each of the three processes merges and a specific/unique color is created.

[162] Matthew 5:16, *Common English Bible*.

This color is indicative of how well a disciple is going about tending to their relationships with God and neighbor. The color generated is not meant to be broadly definitive of a person's character, but descriptive of the way in which the disciple is *currently* living out the faith. It would not be uncommon for a person's individual color to change over time. As each individual in the church works together, that person's light is combined with the others, and we can begin to get a clearer picture (vision) of the church's health and vitality. Before we can discover individual colors and begin mixing colors, we must first consider the palette we will use to color our drawing.

Bits and Palettes

RGB colors are defined using bits. On a very basic level, a "bit" is simply the answer to a binary question. A computer codes the bit with a 1 or 0. To define something more complex, you can combine bits. When you combine two bits, you now have four possibilities (00, 01, 10, and 11). When you combine three bits, you have eight possible values (000, 001, 010, 011, 100, 101, 110, and 111). To find the number of choices for any given number of bits, you take the total number of choices (2) and raise it by a power equal to the total number of bits. To determine the number of variations in a 4-bit string, you would take two raised to the fourth power (2^4) which yields 16 possible options.

RGB color palettes are defined by their total number of bits. For instance, the 24-bit RGB color palette defines each color by using eight bits for each of the three colors (red, green, blue): 8*3 = 24. In an 8-bit system, there are 256 different options. These

options are best described as shades. In a 24-bit RGB color palette, there are 256 different shades each for red, green, and blue. Each shade is numbered on a scale from 0-255. Zero would denote no light. The highest number (255) denotes full light. Each color on the RGB color wheel is coded using three numbers that indicate the shade of red, green, and blue used to create each unique color. To find the number of unique colors in a given palette, take two raised to the power equal to the total number of bits per color cubed. For a 24-bit palette, there are eight bits per color, which equates to nearly 17 million unique colors: $(2^8)^3 = 256^3 = 16{,}777{,}216$ unique colors. Another way of getting to this number is to take 2 raised to the power equal to the total number of bits. In our 24-bit example, $2^{24} = 16{,}777{,}216$.

Figure 6 is colored using a 3-bit RGB color palette. This means that each color (red, green, and blue) is determined by a single bit of information. Each color is either "on" or "off." This creates an 8-color palette: red (1,0,0), green (0,1,0), blue (0,0,1), cyan (0,1,1), magenta (1,0,1), yellow (1,1,0), white (1,1,1), and black (0,0,0). There is no gradation. Images colored by the 3-bit RGB color palette lack detail and any sense of three-dimensional depth (see Figure 7. Parrot with 3-bit Color Palette). While color palettes can have any number of bits, the most common RGB color palettes exist in multiples of three (3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 24, etc.) with an equal distribution of bits across each color. The 15-bit color palette is sometimes described as "high color." This palette offers more depth and dimension to the image to which it is applied (see Figure 8. Parrot with 15-bit Color Palette). The 24-bit palette, referred to as "true color," has 16,777,216 unique colors. The 30-bit palette, known as "deep color," offers more colors than the

human eye can distinguish; however, this palette is sometimes used to create incredibly clear pictures with little pixilation and banding.

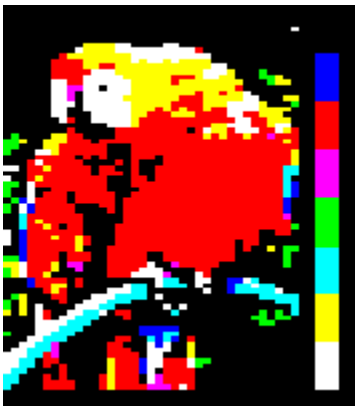

Figure 7. Parrot with 3-bit Color Palette[163]

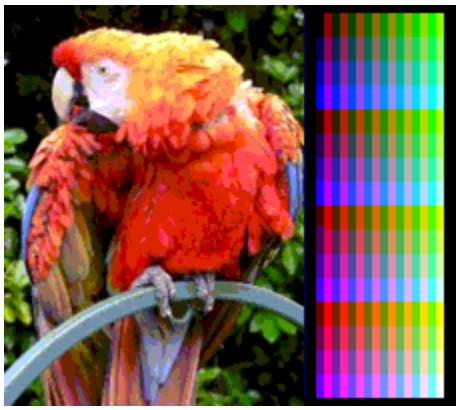

Figure 8. Parrot with 15-bit Color Palette[164]

[163] Ricardo Cancho Niemietz, "File:Screen color test Teletext.png," (image/png), Wikimedia Commons, February 1, 2008, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Screen_color_test_Teletext.png.

[164] Ricardo Cancho Niemietz, "File:Screen color test MSX2 Screen8.png" (image/png), Wikimedia Commons, February 1, 2008, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Screen_color_test_MSX2_Screen8.png.

Table 1 shows the number of shades per color and unique colors in each of the common palettes between 3-bits and 30-bits.

Table 1. Bits, Shades, & Colors

Total Bits	Bits per Color	No. of Shades	No. Unique Colors
3	1	2	8
6	2	4	64
9	3	8	512
12	4	16	4,096
15	5	32	32,768
18	6	64	262,144
21	7	128	2,097,152
24	8	256	16,777,216
27	9	512	134,217,728
30	10	1,024	1,073,741,824

When choosing the palette we will use in our visioning tool, there are two things to consider: 1) the number of inputs; and, 2) the number of unique color outputs. The number of shades will determine our inputs. Our tool will not focus on bits, but shades. For our purposes, the number of shades will provide a scale of intensity that will help us define each unique color code. Remember, there are three processes, so the total number of inputs will be the number of shades times three. As the number of shades increases, the number of unique colors goes up exponentially; however, the more shades used, the more complex the system will need to be to generate the color. Too many shades leads to too many inputs, which will make the tool cumbersome to use. Too few shades will result in a very limited number of unique color outputs. A balance must be struck between having enough inputs to create a clear picture, but not too many as to make the tool overly complicated.

A 3-bit palette is too simplistic. If our visioning tool used the 3-bit color palette, it would consist of three questions, one question for each of the processes (initiating, mending, and deepening); and, the questions could only include binary answers. The questions would have to be coded zero for no and one for yes. An example of these questions might be: 1) Do you seek out the stranger? 2) Do you seek reconciliation with those "who have sinned (or, trespassed) against you"? 3) Do you seek to learn more about those you have already met? In this example, question one relates to the process of initiation (green), question two relates to mending (blue), and question three relates to deepening (red).

Another way of writing these binary questions is to code zero for a negative answer and one for a positive answer. An example of this might be: 1) When I see someone I do not know, I a.) will introduce myself; or, b.) will not introduce myself. 2) When someone "sins against me," I a.) am quick to forgive; or, b.) hold a grudge. 3) How would you characterize your relationship with people you have already met? Do you a.) seek to learn more about the person by asking questions; or, b.) come to your own conclusions based upon what they have shared?

The way a respondent answers these questions would yield a color code. See table 2 for a key of the eight colors generated by the respondent's answers in a 3-bit color palette.

Table 2. 3-bit RGB Palette Survey Key

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Q. $3_{(red)}$	N or B	N or B	N or B	N or B	Y or A	Y or A	Y or A	Y or A
Q. $1_{green)}$	N or B	N or B	Y or A	Y or A	N or B	N or B	Y or A	Y or A
Q. $2_{(blue)}$	N or B	Y or A	N or B	Y or A	N or B	Y or A	N or B	Y or A

Code	0, 0, 0	0, 0, 1	0, 1, 0	0, 1,1	1, 0, 0	1, 0, 1	1, 1, 0	1, 1, 1
Color								

The challenge with using such a low-bit color palette is that the color options are limited and the questions are superficial. It does not yield a nuanced picture. On the opposite end of the complexity scale, a 30-bit palette is too cumbersome. A higher-bit color palette would allow us to create non-binary questions. A question such as: Rate on a scale from 0-7 (0 being never, 7 being always) if you understand worship to help you initiate, mend, and deepen relationship with God and neighbor. Such a question would add 0-7 points to each "color."

For our purposes, the 15-bit (true color) palette provides enough unique colors, while also not demanding too many inputs as to make the generation of a color overly cumbersome. The 15-bit palette generates 32,768 unique colors using 32 different shades of red, green, and blue. Each shade of red, green, and blue is coded on a scale from 0 to 31. This offers enough variety so that we can use both binary questions and scaled questions to determine our base color shades.

Discerning Color

From the start, Methodism sought to be a movement that challenged its adherents to think critically and methodically about their journey of faith. In 1729, John and Charles Wesley started the Oxford "holy club" whose members were, among other things, encouraged to reflect daily on a set of twenty-two questions. These questions were a relational assessment: encouraging reflection on one's relationship with God, others, and the self. Wesley posed similar questions for personal reflection in *A*

Collection of Forms of Prayer, For Every Day in the Week. Reflective questions were even asked of initiates and members of the early Methodist band-societies.[165] The visionary tool we will use to evaluate individual discipleship and congregational vitality stands firmly in the Methodist tradition of discerning personal and social holiness. Holiness, to which our discipleship leads us, is an emulation of God's relational life.

Our assessment will include twenty-eight questions, including binary and scale questions. Appendix 6 supplies a sample print layout of the assessment and a scoring key, which can be used manually to find a decimal color code that provides a unique color based upon the respondent's answers. This assessment could be integrated as part of a database system tracking church member involvement. The database could auto-generate a discipleship report for individuals and a congregational report for church leaders. Below is a brief description of each relational process and the questions that will help define the brilliance of the base colors of our 15-bit RGB color wheel.

Initiate Relationship (Green): This process of discipleship reaches beyond the self and what one knows, in order to to discover the uniqueness of the other (God and neighbor).

1. I have been baptized and confirmed my faith in God before others. [1-Yes, 0-No]
2. I share my faith regularly with others. [1-Yes, 0-No]

[165] See Appendix 5 for the full list of Holy Club questions, the questions from Wesley's *A Collection of Forms of Prayer, For Every Day in the Week* and questions asked of band-society initiates and members.

3. I place myself in situations where I can meet new people (in- and outside of church). [1-Yes, 0-No]

4. When I see visitors at church events, I [1-make it a point to introduce myself, 0-tend to not say anything]

5. I get frustrated when "normal" things are explained—everyone here knows or should know how it is done. [1-Disagree, 0-Agree]

6. I have been on a mission trip. [1-Yes, 0-No]

7. I believe mission trips [0-are primarily about service (doing something to meet a specific need), 1-are an opportunity to serve (do something to meet a need) *and* meet new people, 2-are the start of an on-going relationship]

8. My prayers bring me closer to those I do not know. [1-Agree, 0-Disagree]

9. I long to meet those I pray for. [1-Yes, 0-No]

10. When I attend corporate worship, I seek out those I do not know and welcome the unknown. [Scale: 0-Never to 7-Always]

11. I seek to pray not only for others, but with them. [Scale: 0-Never to 7-Always]

12. Scripture helps me see God and those I have not seen or considered before. [Scale: 0-Never to 7-Always]

Mend Relationship (Blue): This process of discipleship calls us to bear witness to our own brokenness and the brokenness around us; and, it challenges us to seek reconciliation with God, neighbor, and ourselves.

1. I admit when I have wronged ("sinned against") another. [0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2-Sometimes, 3-Always]

2. When I have hurt someone (spiritually, emotionally, physically), I [0-ignore it, 1-say I am sorry, 2-seek to right the wrong as much as possible]

3. I confess my sins before others. [1-Yes, 0-No]

4. l am willing to be told my faults. [0-Never, 1-Sometimes, 2-Always]

5. I speak up when I have been wronged ("sinned against") or hurt. [0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2-Sometimes, 3-Always]

6. I believe that all relationships can be mended (made "right"). [1-Yes, 0-No]

7. When I attend corporate worship, I come to confess my brokenness and seek reconciliation with God and neighbor. [Scale: 0-Never to 7-Always]

8. When I pray, I confess my brokenness, name the brokenness around me, and seek healing. [Scale: 0-Never to 7-Always]

9. Scripture helps me understand my own brokenness, the brokenness around me, and ways healing might come. [Scale: 0-Never to 7-Always]

Deepen Relationship (Red): This process of discipleship dives us deeper into the mystery of that which we think we know.

1. I read the Bible? [0-Never, 1-Only in church, 2-Occasionally at home, 3-Daily]

2. I gather with my family and friends [0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2-On Special Occasions, 3-Often].

3. I know all I need to know about God. [0-Agree, 1-Disagree]

4. I learn something new about those close to me (my friends, my family, my spouse) [0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2-Sometimes, 3-Always].

5. In corporate worship, I see and learn new things about God and those I already know. [Scale: 0-Never to 7-Always]

6. Prayer draws me closer to God and closer to those for whom I pray. [Scale: 0-Never to 7-Always]

7. Scripture helps me to see and know God and my neighbor. [Scale: 0-Disagree to 7-Agree]

This assessment is meant to be a visionary tool that helps disciples see with some amount of clarity their current discipleship practices. This is not an unbiased survey. It is rooted in the understanding that faithful discipleship, holiness of heart and life, is about committing fully to initiating, mending, and deepening relationship. This view of

holiness is rooted in the relational being of God and creation. Each question in the survey points toward understanding what holiness can look like in practical ways.

The effectiveness of this assessment can be judged by the number of unique colors it generates. If different respondents consistently generate the same color code, then the questions may not be nuanced enough to cover the breadth of a disciple's practice no matter how pious or undeveloped it may be. If this happens, the questions will need to be changed and/or the palette changed to incorporate more varied responses so that more unique colors are generated. The more varied the colors, the clearer the picture will be when assessing the vitality of the church.

Mixing Color

John Wesley, in his preface to the first edition of *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1739), famously wrote, "Solitary religion is not to be found [in the Gospel of Christ]. 'Holy solitaries' is a phrase no more consistent with the gospel than holy adulterers. The gospel of Christ knows of no religion but social; no holiness, but social holiness."[166] Discipleship, the pursuit of holiness in heart and life, is not a solitary endeavor. Disciples have an obligation to participate in a community of faith.[167] "All members of Christ's universal church are called to share in the ministry which is committed to the whole

[166] John Wesley and Charles Wesley, *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (London: Strahan, 1739), viii.

[167] Cf. *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2016), 158 (para. 219. "Mutual Responsibility).

church of Jesus Christ. . . . Each member is called upon to be a witness for Christ in the world, a light and leaven in society, and a reconciler in a culture of conflict."[168] As each Christian lives out the faith by initiating, mending, and deepening relationship, that person's light is added to and mixed with the light of other Christians in the church. Individual Christians together, as the church, "are the light of the world. A city on top of a hill can't be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they put it on top of a lampstand, and it shines on all who are in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before people, so they can see the good things you do and praise your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16, CEB).

Each local church is a light to its community. A local church can use the above-mentioned assessment congregation-wide, having each individual in the church take the assessment, to help understand the light being emitted into the community. For the congregational color to reflect fully the actual color of the congregation, great effort should be made to have every member participate. Congregational leaders can then average out the base colors generated by each member to create a unique congregational color. It may be helpful to calculate two averages: 1) the average of respondents; and, 2) the average of all members, including those who did not respond. Those who do not participate in the life of the church and did not return a survey, add no light to the church. Their color code is (0,0,0). This will darken the shade of the congregational color. It is important to include inactive members in the coloring of the congregation because,

[168] *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2016), 158.

whether they participate or not, they are considered part of the church. Every member's involvement or lack thereof impacts the color of light streaming forth from the church. Many, if not most, churches carry over a significant number of inactive persons on their membership roll each year. The Franklin United Methodist Church is no exception; we conservatively named over 120 inactive members on our 2019 Charge Conference Report. This was over double the average weekly worship attendance. These inactive members will substantially darken the color of the Franklin United Methodist Church. Because the color will be so skewed, it will be helpful also to determine the color of the congregation without taking into account the inactive members. This will give a clearer picture of the way persons are actively living out their faith through the church. One way of depicting this information could be to draw a square subdivided into smaller boxes totaling the total number of members. Give each member a number starting with the number one; then number each box (one through the total number of members). Color each individual box with the color from that member's assessment. If the member did not respond or is inactive, color their box black (0, 0, 0). This will give you a good visual of how the inactive members are darkening the congregation's color. Another way of sorting the members, using the same colored boxes, could be to group all the inactive members together. This would help show the contrast between those who participate and those who do not.

Other Possibilities

This discipleship assessment could be used on a smaller communal scale to understand better the gifts of leadership and ministry teams. Knowing a person's color

could lead to better balanced teams. For instance, an evangelism committee might be well served by including persons who score high in the initiating process and have a green tint to their individual color. For a church governance board, it may be more prudent to balance the team out so that, together, the board emits white (ish) light. Team colorization is beyond the scope of this project, but the assessment could easily be adapted for such purposes.

The congregational colorization process detailed above intentionally strays away from using traditional congregational statistics like average worship attendance, average number of visitors each week, total professions of faith, etc. One could develop questions that utilize these statistics to transform the data from the high color (15-bit color palette) assessment above into a true color or deep color analysis. The individual assessments would give an average range between zero and thirty-one. Additional range could be added by asking broader congregational questions like: what percentage of your average worship attendance are guests? This percentage number could provide zero to one hundred additional points to the scale. It would not be overly complicated to add additional questions so that the scale increases to 0-255 (true color) or even 0-1,023 (deep color).

CONCLUSION

The Light of Life (Together)

Jesus spoke to the people again, saying,
"I am the light of the world.
Whoever follows me won't walk in darkness
but will have the light of life.[169]

Jesus was, so the story goes, traveling through the Galilean countryside, avoiding Judea because the religious leaders wanted to kill him (cf. John 7:1). It came time for the Feast of Booths, known today as the Festival of Sukkot or the Festival of Tabernacles. Jesus' brothers said to him, "Leave Galilee. Go to Judea so that your disciples can see the amazing works that you do. Those who want to be known publicly don't do things secretly. Since you can do these things, show yourself to the world" (John 7:3-4, CEB).

Jesus was reluctant to go. In fact, he told them he would not go. "However, after his brothers left for the festival, he went too—not openly but in secret" (John 7:10, CEB). It was the most important end of the year feast on the Jewish calendar. An important part of the festivities in Jerusalem revolved around the lighting of the four lampstands in the Temple Court of the Women on the first night of the Feast. It was said that "these lampstands produced so much light that 'there was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that did

[169] John 8:12, *Common English Bible*.

not reflect [their light].'"[170] Each night of the Feast, celebrants throughout Jerusalem would dance before their home *sukkah* with candlesticks and burning torches adding their light to the joyous celebration.

It is in the middle of the festival, with lampstands, candlesticks, and torches gleaming, people dancing, and Jerusalem all aglow that Jesus proclaims, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me won't walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (John 8:12, CEB). By claiming to be the light of the world, Jesus "assigns to himself the roles given to the law (Ps 119:105), the servant of God (Isa 42:6), and even God himself (Pss 18:28; 27:1) in the [Old Testament]."[171] Thus, Jesus is "a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105, KJV). He is "a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness" (Isaiah 42:6d-7, NRSV). Jesus is the Lord God who, in the words of the Psalmist, "illumines my darkness" (Psalm 18:28, CEB). He "is my light and my salvation" (Psalm 27:1, CEB). John Wesley, in his notes on John 8:12, writes that the person who follows Jesus "shall in nowise walk in darkness – in ignorance, wickedness, misery: but shall have the light of life…. [They] shall have the Divine light continually shining upon [them], diffusing over [their] soul knowledge, holiness, joy, till [they are]

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[170] Gail R. O'Day, "The Gospel of John: Introduction,Commentary and Reflections," in *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), vol. 9, 632.

[171] Study note for John 8:12 in *The Wesley Study Bible*, ed. Joel B. Green, William H. Willimon (Nashville: Common English Bible, 2012), 1345.

guided by it to life everlasting."[172] Jesus, the Light of the World, leads us into life that truly is life. That life is life together, with God and one another, in relationship. As we live life in intentional relationship—as we initiate, mend, and deepen relationship—we shine the divine light into the world for all the world to see.

When I was appointed to the Franklin United Methodist Church, I was asked to help the church discern a strategic plan and vision for vitality. Life and vitality come through relationship. Life is not sustained by visioneering a future for the sake of the institutional church. Vitality and life are found in relationship with God and neighbor. The history of the Franklin Methodists is a testament to the fact that while visioneering can lead to substantial congregational growth, that growth is not sustainable.

What holds the church together and what ultimately brings life—for the individual and for the church—is relationship. If Franklin United Methodist Church wants to find life and vitality as a community of faith, it cannot be satisfied with meeting its budget and offering great programmatic ministry. Instead, it must help and train its members (and the broader community!) to initiate, mend, and deepen relationship with God and others. It must provide opportunity for God and people to see each other face-to-face. This opportunity happens primarily through worship. By training members to initiate, mend, and deepen relationship with God and one another through worship, the church finds life and becomes a shining light to the world.

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[172] John Wesley, "Notes on the Gospel According to St. John," Wesley Center Online, Northwest Nazarene University, accessed February 29, 2020, http://wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/john-wesleys-notes-on-the-bible/notes-on-the-gospel-according-to-st-john/#Chapter+VIII.

Developing Vision

Johnny Cash released the song "I See Men as Trees Walking" on April 1, 1973. The song recounts the story of Jesus healing the blind man at Bethsaida (cf. Mark 8:22-26). A blind man was brought to see Jesus as he approached the town. Jesus led the man away from the city, spit on his eyes, laid hands on him and asked the man, "Do you see anything?" In Cash's retelling of the story, the man opens his eyes and sees the dim outline of the people around him and gleefully replies, "I see men as trees walking. I'm beginning to see." The blind man's response seems the most fitting response, I think, for visionary leaders. Visionary leaders are always and only beginning to see.

While God's vision for the future is constant—a vision of peace, where all is reconciled through Christ—our ability to live into it is always a moving target. We are only and ever beginning to see it come to fruition in our midst. As such, we must constantly evaluate how well we, as individuals and as communities of faith, are reflecting the divine light into the world. It is my prayer that the assessment tool provided in Chapter 4 will provide a means of understanding, if only for a moment, how well we, as individuals and a community of faith, are stewarding the light of life. Our vision is always developing as we tend to our relationships and look with hope to God's future.

> Now we see…dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. (1 Corinthians 13:12, NRSV)

APPENDIX 1:

THE EVOLVING MISSION AND VISION

OF THE FRANKLIN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The purpose of the Franklin United Methodist Church "is to grow as a Church in Christian Fellowship, Worship, Education, and Community Outreach both individually and collectively."

adopted May 2, 1982

Franklin United Methodist Church will provide opportunities for people to meet Jesus Christ, grow in Him, and become His disciples.

Franklin United Methodist Church is dedicated to making disciples of Jesus Christ by helping people of all generations know and live God's way. It is a place where people of all generations come to experience meaningful worship, to love and be loved, to grow in Christ, to share in Christian fellowship and reach out in concern for others.

proposed at the 1998 Charge Conference

Franklin United Methodist Church is dedicated to making disciples of Jesus Christ by helping people know and live God's way. It is a place where all come to experience meaningful worship, to love and be loved, to grow in Christ and reach out in concern for others.

adopted on Ash Wednesday, March 8, 2000

Our ministry shares the good news of God's love and invites people into a committed relationship with Christ.

Franklin United Methodist Church is a welcoming and loving community that extends beyond the boundaries of our immediate church. Our physical space is attractive, inviting and is flexible in order to accommodate our needs today while ensuring ample room for tomorrow's growth. Our dynamic, inclusive worship services are offered at various times and in a variety of styles. Open to all ages, they encourage active participation and incorporate inspirational music. Our Christian education programs and vibrant fellowship groups are offered year round to all ages and encourage caring relationships, spiritual growth and personal development. Our local,

national and international mission outreach demonstrates our deep commitment to serving as Disciples of Christ.

Vision 2020, adopted May 30, 2007

Our Mission

To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation the world.

Our Vision

Franklin United Methodist Church seeks to be a community
where all can experience meaningful worship,
where all can love and be loved,
where all can grow in Christ
and reach out in concern for others.

suggested updates, September 15, 2019

The Mission of The United Methodist Church

To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation the world.

Our Vision

Franklin United Methodist Church
seeks to be a community
where all can experience
meaningful relationship with God,
grow in Christ, and
reach out in love to others;
a community
where all can love and be loved and
be accepted as you are.

***DRAFT* approved by Church Council, November 17, 2019**

APPENDIX 2:

FRANKLIN METHODIST PASTORS

1. Rev. John M. Merrill……(1853) 1854[173]
2. Rev. Pliny Wood……..1855
3. Rev. Moses P. Webster…….....1856

From 1857 to 1871 there were no appointments made to the Franklin, Massachusetts, charge of The Methodist Episcopal Church. No regular services were held. A class meeting met for part of the time. In 1857, Elias Paine led the Methodist Class meeting in Franklin "until his removal from town." In 1865 Rev. J. L. Barrows of Holliston reorganized a class meeting in Franklin and appointed Abner Fisk as its leader. Mr. Fisk "cheered and kept the little band together until called to another field of labor. Methodism now seemed a failure. The good seed sown was apparently lost. But it was destined to appear again in after years."

4. Rev. William Merrill…….....1871
5. Rev. John R. Cushing…..... 1871[174]
6. Rev. E. P. King…… 1872
7. Rev. J. N. Short…….....1874
8. Rev. George W. Hudson……..1877
9. Rev. William Wignall……..1878
10. Rev. O. W. Adams…….....1880
11. Rev. A. C. Godfrey…….....1882

[173] Rev. John M. Merrill was sent to Franklin following the April 1853 session of annual conference. It was only after he setup a class meeting and Sunday School that he was officially appointed in 1854; nonetheless, Methodism in Franklin was established in 1853.

[174] In the lists of pastors recalled in recent years, Rev. William Merrill is listed as the first pastor of the charge and the Rev. John R. Cushing is not listed. In the history written in 1901, Rev. William Merrill is not listed as one of the pastors of the Franklin charge. According to *The Second Book of Record*, Rev. William Merrill of West Medway established the first class meeting. It is noted that he preached several times in the town hall where the class meeting met. I have chosen to list him as one of the pastors of the charge because, the historical record notes that he "saw an auspicious opening for Methodism and was anxious to have a Methodist Church formed." He and the presiding elder of the Boston District visited Franklin together; and, in November 1871, Rev. John R. Cushing was sent as a supply preacher until an appointment could be made at the next meeting of the annual conference.

12. Rev. George E. Robinson……1882
13. Rev. M. D. Hornbeck…….....1883
14. Rev. J. M. Driver……..1884
15. Rev. Arthur P. Sharp…….....1885
16. Rev. Franklin Furber…….....1888
17. Rev. R. H. Howard…….....1889
18. Rev. William S. Jagger…… 1893
19. Rev. J. P. Chadbourne……..1897
20. Rev. W. W. Shenk……1899
21. Rev. S. A. Cook……..... 1899
22. Rev. C. H. Hannaford…….. 1902
23. Rev. H. O. Enwall…… 1903
24. Rev. Frank A. Everett…….. 1904
25. Rev. George H. Rogers…… 1907
26. Rev. J. H. Stubbs……..1909
27. Rev. William Hodge…… 1914
28. Rev. Franklin J. Forrest……1916
29. Rev. Charles F. Parsons…….....1920
30. Rev. Oscar L. Simpson…… 1921
31. Rev. Mason W. Sharp……..1923
32. Rev. Arthur Wright……..1925
33. Rev. Charles E. Pederson……1929
34. Rev. Christian B. Hansen……1933
35. Rev. Dr. David M. Angell……1934
36. Rev. J. Garfield Sallis…….. 1940
37. Rev. Gordon C. Capen……1943
38. Rev. George Clelland, Jr……..1947
39. Rev. Raymond E. Biggers……1950
40. Rev. William J. Cook…….....1952
41. Rev. Robert Durkee……. 1954
42. Rev. John T. Dahlquist……1956
43. Rev. Lloyd Duren……1962
44. Rev. David Spieler…….....1962
45. Rev. James Recob…… 1963
46. Rev. J. Robert Uhler……1966
47. Rev. Edwin F. Taylor…….....1968
48. Rev. David Glahn……1971[175]
49. Rev. F. Willard Moffatt…….. 1976
50. Rev. Frank Gulinello……1978
51. Rev. Samuel Johnson…….....1981

[175] Rev. John Lilly served the Franklin charge from 1971-1972 as an assistant to Rev. David Glahn.

52. Rev. Cecil Lackore……..... 1991
53. Rev. Robert Webster……1993
54. Rev. Matthew Wissell……..1996
55. Rev. Travis Bonnette-Kim…….....2002
56. Rev. Dr. Abraham Waya……..2007
57. Rev. Dr. Dianne E.S. Carpenter….....2010
58. Rev. Jacob W. Juncker……2018

APPENDIX 3:

MEMBERSHIP AND ATTENDANCE TRENDS OF THE FRANKLIN CHARGE

In years where numbers reported on Annual Reports were different than on-going records, the number from on-going records are placed first and the reported number is placed in parentheses. Shaded rows mark years of pastoral transition.

Table 3. Membership and Attendance Trends of the Franklin Methodists

Year	Total Membership	Avg. Worship Attendance	Total Persons in Christian Formation
1903	80		
1951	238		
1962	242		
1963	256		
1964	261		
1965	271		
1966	289		
1967	269		
1968	267		
1969	272		
1970	258		
1971	263		
1972	253		
1973	226		
1974	226		
1975	217		
1976	208	93	
1977			
1978	200	65	
1979	200	60	
1980	200	55	
1981	182		
1982	182	72	
1983	187	78	
1984	203	85	
1985	202	90	
1986	209	100	

1990	261	114	
1991	266	117	97
1992	268	116	106
1993	263	103	84
1994	274	113	99
1995	277	98	117
1996	294	115	111
1997	295	112	117
1998	296	123	85
1999	253	110	52
2000	248	101	95
2001	249	97	65
2002	250	99	101
2003	278	119	109
2004	293	133	124
2005	324	137	
2006	352	135	152
2007	370	140	143
2008	324	125	134
2009	319	100	46
2010	321	71.1 (80)	52
2011	324	80	49
2012	324	80	46
2013	355	81	45
2014	355	81	49
2015	360	58.5 (78)	41
2016	367	56.8 (76)	44
2017	373	58 (70)	42
2018	370	58	
2019	365	56	

APPENDIX 4:

A DIALOGICAL PREACHING EXAMPLE, "LIFE TOGETHER"

This discussion was originally written for an Ecumenical Lenten Service at Lee Memorial United Methodist Church (Norwich, Connecticut) on March 18, 2018. This discussion, as written, never happened: the service was cancelled due to inclement weather. The discussion was published to my blog (https://jacobjuncker.wordpress.com/2018/03/23/life-together/) on March 23, 2018.

In 1951, D. O. Hebb, a psychologist at McGill University, received a grant from the Defence Research Board of Canada to study the effects of monotony and isolation on individuals. Participants laid in a lit cubicle for 24 hours a day for as long as they could stand,

> with time out only for meals (which they usually ate sitting on the edge of the bed) and going to the toilet. They wore translucent plastic visors which transmitted diffuse light but prevented pattern vision. Cotton gloves and cardboard cuffs extending beyond the fingertips restricted perception by touch. Their auditory perception was limited by a U-shaped foam rubber pillow on which their heads lay and by a continuous hum of air-conditioning equipment which masked small sounds.[176]

Researchers observed that participants found it increasingly difficult to concentrate in isolation. Participants became increasingly irritable, restless, and desperate for stimulation.

> When they came out for meals, they tended to be garrulous and attempted to draw the experimenters into conversation. In moving about, as when they were led to the toilet, they appeared dazed and confused, and had increasing difficulty in finding their way about the washroom.

The researchers concluded that

> prolonged exposure to a monotonous [isolated] environment…has definitely deleterious effects. The individual's thinking is impaired; he shows childish emotional responses; his visual perception becomes disturbed; he suffers from hallucinations; his brain-wave pattern changes…

[176] Woodburn Heron, "The Pathology of Boredom," *Scientific American* 196, no. 1 (1957): 53.

> A changing sensory environment seems essential for human beings. Without it, the brain ceases to function in an adequate way, and abnormalities of behavior develop. In fact, as Christopher Burney observed in his remarkable account of his stay in solitary confinement: "Variety is not the spice of life, it is the very stuff of life."[177]

We humans need variety, diversity, and difference in our lives. And, we need others in order to experience life that truly is life. It is a spiritual truth placed in the very mouth of God in one of the earliest chapters of the Bible, "It's not good that the human is alone" (Genesis 2:18, *Common English Bible*). We can only thrive in and through community. We can only find life when its lived, together, with others.

Isolation not only has a deleterious affect on us physically and emotionally, it also affects us spiritually.

Is it possible to live one's faith in isolation?

In his preface to Hymns and Sacred Poems (1739), John Wesley notes that "Solitary religion is not to be found [in the Gospel of Christ]. 'Holy solitaries' is a phrase no more consistent with the gospel than holy adulterers. The gospel of Christ knows no religion but social; no holiness, but social holiness."

Why do you think living a solitary faith is so dangerous?

What do we gain by living our faith "socially," in community?

What do we gain by living our faith, together, with others? Everything—a glimpse of heaven on earth, an experience of salvation in the flesh (which is the promise of scripture).

What do we have to lose by living our faith in isolation? Everything.

Love, forgiveness, mercy, peace, and joy cannot be experienced alone? We can never truly find God if we refuse to find God's image in the face of another human being—friend *and* foe, loved one *and* stranger—all of whom were created in God's image.

Love, forgiveness, mercy, peace, and joy each need another. Love turned inward is pride.

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[177] Ibid., 56.

Forgiveness and mercy without an other is self-justification. Joy experienced alone is hysteria. And, peace with or by one's self seems to me to be the very definition of isolation.

Faith must be lived in community if we're ever to discover the power of love, forgiveness, mercy, peace and joy in our midst—heaven on earth.

Heaven cannot be experienced alone. We need one another to enact and experience the principles of heaven.

What do we gain through a communal expression of faith? Heaven, here, in our midst.

Amen? and amen.

Other Thoughts and Questions for Conversation:

- When you miss church, what do you think your missing? Some music? a lecture? an opportunity to experience (however fleeting) heaven on earth?
- For a longer excerpt of Wesley's argument for community over isolation, see https://jacobjuncker.wordpress.com/2016/09/14/community-not-isolation/. You will also find there a link to *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (1739).

APPENDIX 5:

QUESTIONING HOLINESS

Methodists have a long tradition of asking questions of oneself and others regarding holiness. Below are a few lists of questions used by early Methodists to discern the state of their own and each other's faith and practice.

Questions of Oxford Holy Club Members (1729)[178]

1. Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I am better than I really am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?
2. Am I honest in all my acts and words, or do I exaggerate?
3. Do I confidentially pass on to another what was told to me in confidence?
4. Can I be trusted?
5. Am I a slave to dress, friends, work, or habits?
6. Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?
7. Did the Bible live in me today?
8. Do I give it time to speak to me every day?
9. A I enjoying prayer?
10. When did I last speak to someone else about my faith?
11. Do I pray about the money I spend?
12. Do I get to bed on time and get up on time?
13. Do I disobey God in anything?
14. Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?
15. Am I defeated in any part of my life?
16. Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy, or distrustful?
17. How do I spend my spare time?
18. Am I proud?
19. Do I thank God that I am not as other people, especially as the Pharisees who despised the publican?
20. Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold a resentment toward or disregard? If so, what am I doing about it?
21. Do I grumble or complain constantly?
22. Is Christ real to me?

[178] "Everyday Disciples: John Wesley's 22 Questions," General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church, October 25, 2016, https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/everyday-disciples-john-wesleys-22-questions.

Questions from *A Collection of Forms of Prayer, For Every Day in the Week* (1733)[179]

SUNDAY EVENING

General Questions which a serious Christian may propose to himself before he begins his Evening Devotions.

1. With what degree of attention and fervour did I use my morning prayers, public or private?
2. Have I done anything without a present, or at least a previous, perception of its direct or remote tendency to the glory of God?
3. Did I in the morning consider what particular virtue I was to exercise, and what business I had to do, in the day?
4. Have I been zealous to undertake, and active in doing, what good I could?
5. Have I interested myself any farther in the affairs of others than charity required?
6. Have I, before I visited or was visited, considered how I might thereby give or receive improvement?
7. Have I mentioned any failing or fault of any man, when it was not necessary for the good of another?
8. Have I unnecessarily grieved any one by word or deed?
9. Have I before or in every action considered how it might be a means of improving in the virtue of the day?

Particular Questions relative to the Love of God.

1. Have I set apart some of this day to think upon his perfections and mercies?
2. Have I labored to make this day a day of heavenly rest, sacred to divine love?
3. Have I employed those parts of it in works of necessity and mercy, which were not employed in prayer, reading, and meditation?

MONDAY MORNING

General Questions, which may be used every Morning.

1. Did I think of God first and last?
2. Have I examined myself how I behaved since last night's retirement?
3. Am I resolved to do all the good I can this day, and to be diligent in the business of my calling?

MONDAY EVENING

Particular Questions relating to the Love of our Neighbour.

1. Have I thought anything but my conscience too dear to part with, to please or serve my neighbour?
2. Have I rejoiced or grieved with him?
3. Have I received his infirmities with pity, not with anger?

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[179] John Wesley, "A Collection of Forms of Prayer, For Every Day of the Week [First Printed in the Year 1733]" in *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 203-237.

4. Have I contradicted any one, either where I had no good end in view, or where there was no probability of convincing?
5. Have I let him I thought in the wrong (in a trifle) have the last word?

TUESDAY EVENING

Particular Questions relating to Humility.

1. Have I labored to conform all my thoughts, words, and actions to these fundamental maxims: "I am nothing, I have nothing, I can do nothing?"
2. Have I set apart some time this day to think upon my infirmities, follies, and sins?
3. Have I ascribed to myself any part of any good which God did by my hand?
4. Have I said or done anything with a view to the praise of men?
5. Have I desired the praise of men?
6. Have I taken pleasure in it?
7. Have I commended myself, or others, to their faces, unless for God's sake, and then with fear and trembling?
8. Have I despised any one's advice?
9. Have I, when I though so, said, "I am in the wrong?"
10. Have I received contempt for things indifferent, with meekness? for doing my duty with joy?
11. Have I omitted justifying myself where the glory of God was not concerned? Have I submitted to be thought in the wrong?
12. Have I, when contemned, First, prayed God it might not discourage or puff me up; Secondly, that it might not be imputed to the contemner; Thirdly, that it might heal my pride?
13. Have I, without some particular good in view, mentioned the contempt I had met with?

WEDNESDAY EVENING

Particular Questions relating to Mortification.

1. Have I done anything merely because it was pleasing?
2. Have I not only not done what passion solicited me to, but done just the contrary?
3. Have I received the inconveniences I could not avoid as means of mortification chosen for me by God?
4. Have I contrived pretences to avoid self-denial? In particular,
5. Have I thought any occasion of denying myself too small to be embraced?
6. Have I submitted my will to the will of every one that opposed it, except where the glory of God was concerned?
7. Have I set apart some time for endeavouring after a lively sense of the sufferings of Christ and my own sins? for deprecating God's judgment, and thinking how to amend?

THURSDAY EVENING

Particular Questions relating to Resignation and Meekness.

1. Have I endeavoured to will what God wills, and that only?

2. Have I received everything that has befallen me without my choice, as the choice of infinite wisdom and goodness for me, with thanks?
3. Have I (after doing what he requires of me to do concerning them) left all future things absolutely to God's disposal; that is, have I laboured to be wholly indifferent to whichsoever way he shall ordain for me?
4. Have I resumed my claim to my body, soul, friends, fame, or fortune, which I have made over to God; or repented of my gift, when God accepted any of them at my hands?
5. Have I endeavoured to be cheerful, mild, and courteous in whatever I said or did?
6. Have I said anything with a stern look, accent, or gesture? particularly with regard to religion?

FRIDAY EVENING

Questions relating to Mortification :—See before the Prayers for Wednesday Evening.

SATURDAY EVENING

Questions relating to Thankfulness.

1. Have I allotted some time for thanking God for the blessings of the past week?
2. Have I, in order to be the more sensible of them, seriously and deliberately considered the several circumstances that attended them?
3. Have I considered each of them as an obligation to greater love, and, consequently, to stricter holiness?

Band Society Questions (1738)[180]

QUESTIONS FOR INITIATES

1. Have you forgiveness of your sins?
2. Have you peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ?
3. Have you the witness of God's Spirit with your Spirit, that you are a child of God?
4. Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart?
5. Has no sin, inward or outward, dominion over you?
6. Do you desire to be told of your faults?
7. Do you desire to be told of all your faults, and that plain and home?
8. Do you desire, that every one of us should tell you, from time to time, whatsoever is in his heart concerning you?
9. Consider! Do you desire we should tell you whatsoever we think, whatsoever we fear, whatsoever we hear, concerning you?
10. Do you desire, that in doing this, we should come as close as possible, that we should cut to the quick, and search your heart to the bottom?

[180] "Rules of the Band Societies. Drawn up December 25, 1738" (London, 1774).

11. Is it your desire and design, to be on this and all occasions, entirely open, so as to speak every thing that is in your heart without exception, without disguise, and without reserve?

QUESTIONS ASKED AT EVERY MEETING

1. What known sins have you committed since our last meeting?
2. What temptations have you met with?
3. How were you delivered?
4. What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be sin or not?

APPENDIX 6:

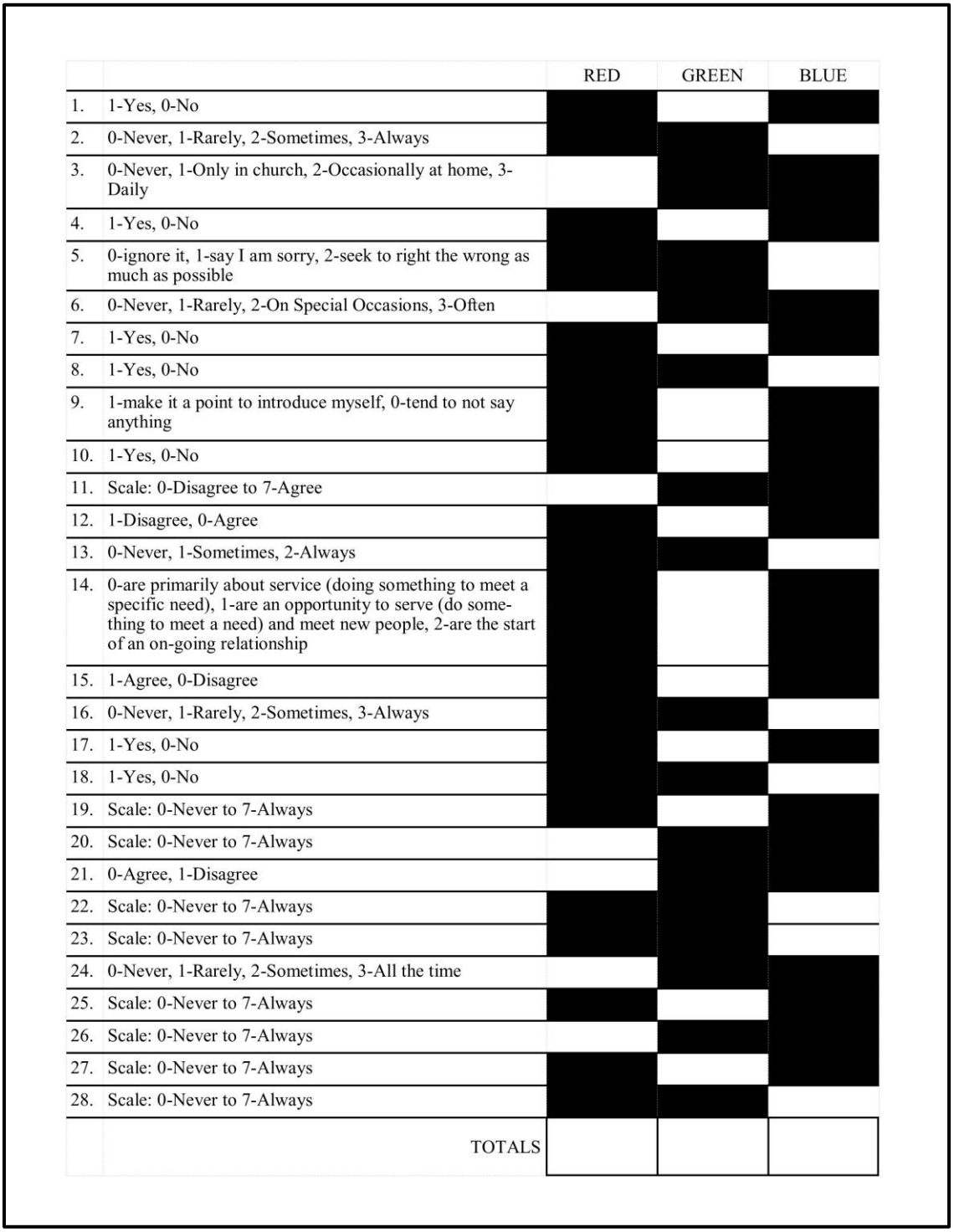
RELATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP ASSESSMENT

1.	I have been baptized and confirmed my faith in God before others.	Yes No
2.	I admit when I have wronged ("sinned against") another.	Never Rarely Sometimes Always
3.	I read the Bible...	Never Only in church Occasionally at home Daily
4.	I share my faith regularly with others.	Yes No
5.	When I have hurt someone (spiritually, emotionally, physically), I...	Ignore it Say I am sorry Seek to right the wrong
6.	I gather with my family and friends...	Never Rarely On special occasions often
7.	I place myself in situations where I can meet new people (in- and outside of church).	Yes No
8.	I confess my sins before others.	Yes No
9.	When I see visitors at church events, I...	Make it a point to introduce myself Tend to not say anything
10.	I have been on a mission trip.	Yes No
11.	Scripture helps me to see and know God and my neighbor.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Disagree Agree
12.	I get frustrated when "normal" things are explained—everyone here knows or should know how it is done.	Agree Disagree
13.	I am willing to be told my faults.	Never Sometimes Always
14.	I believe mission trips...	Are primarily about service (doing something to meet a specific need) Are an opportunity to serve (do something to meet a specific need) *and* meet new people. Are the start of an on-going relationship
15.	My prayers bring me closer to those I do not know.	Agree Disagree
16.	I speak up when I have been wronged ("sinned against") or hurt.	Never Rarely Sometimes Always

Figure 9. Relational Discipleship Written Assessment, page 1

17.	I long to meet those I pray for.	Yes No
18.	I believe that all relationships can be mended (made "right").	Yes No
19.	When I attend corporate worship, I come to confess my brokenness and seek reconciliation with God and neighbor.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Never Always
20.	In corporate worship, I see and learn new things about God and those I already know.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Never Always
21.	I know all I need to know about God.	Agree Disagree
22.	When I attend corporate worship, I seek out those I do not know and welcome the unknown.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Never Always
23.	When I pray, I confess my brokenness, name the brokenness around me, and seek healing.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Never Always
24.	I learn something new about those close to me (my friends, my family, my spouse).	Never Rarely Sometimes Always
25.	I seek to pray not only for others, but with them.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Never Always
26.	Prayer draws me closer to God and closer to those I pray for.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Never Always
27.	Scripture helps me see God and those I have not seen or considered before.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Never Always
28.	Scripture helps me understand my own brokenness, the brokenness around me, and ways healing might come.	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Never Always

Figure 10. Relational Discipleship Written Assessment, page 2



		RED	GREEN	BLUE
1.	1-Yes, 0-No			
2.	0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2-Sometimes, 3-Always			
3.	0-Never, 1-Only in church, 2-Occasionally at home, 3-Daily			
4.	1-Yes, 0-No			
5.	0-ignore it, 1-say I am sorry, 2-seek to right the wrong as much as possible			
6.	0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2-On Special Occasions, 3-Often			
7.	1-Yes, 0-No			
8.	1-Yes, 0-No			
9.	1-make it a point to introduce myself, 0-tend to not say anything			
10.	1-Yes, 0-No			
11.	Scale: 0-Disagree to 7-Agree			
12.	1-Disagree, 0-Agree			
13.	0-Never, 1-Sometimes, 2-Always			
14.	0-are primarily about service (doing something to meet a specific need), 1-are an opportunity to serve (do something to meet a need) and meet new people, 2-are the start of an on-going relationship			
15.	1-Agree, 0-Disagree			
16.	0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2-Sometimes, 3-Always			
17.	1-Yes, 0-No			
18.	1-Yes, 0-No			
19.	Scale: 0-Never to 7-Always			
20.	Scale: 0-Never to 7-Always			
21.	0-Agree, 1-Disagree			
22.	Scale: 0-Never to 7-Always			
23.	Scale: 0-Never to 7-Always			
24.	0-Never, 1-Rarely, 2-Sometimes, 3-All the time			
25.	Scale: 0-Never to 7-Always			
26.	Scale: 0-Never to 7-Always			
27.	Scale: 0-Never to 7-Always			
28.	Scale: 0-Never to 7-Always			
	TOTALS			

Figure 11. Relational Discipleship Assessment, Scoring Key

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